

March 15<sup>th</sup> 2016

# Permanency Service Final Specification

Version 1.9

© Peterborough City Council February 2016

[Lou Williams](#)

SERVICE DIRECTOR CHILDREN AND SAFEGUARDING

# Peterborough Permanency Service

## Contents

Section	Title	Page
1.	An Innovative, Child-Centred Commissioning Relationship	5
2.	About these Proposals	6
3.	About Peterborough	8
3.1.	About the Population of Peterborough	8
3.2.	About Children's Services and Adoption & Fostering in Peterborough	9
4.	Views of Key Stakeholders about these Proposals	10
4.1.	Children and Young People	10
4.2.	Foster Carers	10
4.3.	Members of Staff	10
5.	General Arrangements for Service Delivery	11
5.1.	Adherence to Legislation and Statutory Guidance	11
5.2.	Human Resources Issues including Safer Recruitment	12
5.3.	Inclusivity of this Service Specification	13
6.	Functions included within this Service Specification	13
6.1.	Fostering and Adoption Services	13
6.1.1.	Members of Staff	13
6.1.2.	Fostering Services	13
6.1.3.	Detail of current Fostering Households	15
6.1.4.	Transfer of Foster Carers	16
6.1.5.	Summary of Fostering Services to be Provided	16
6.1.6.	Fees and Allowances for Foster Carers	23
6.1.7.	Adoption Services	24
6.1.8.	Summary of Adoption Services to be Provided	24
6.1.9.	Payment of Adoption Allowances and Arrangements for Financial Assessment	29
6.1.10.	Supporting Contact Arrangements	29
7.	Placement & Resource Finding Service	29
7.1.	Initial Health Assessments	31
8.	Family Group Conferencing Service	31
9.	Special Guardianship & Child Arrangement Orders	32
9.1.	Assessment	32
9.2.	Support to Carers	33
9.3.	Promotion of Special Guardianship Orders to Foster Carers	34
9.4.	Legacy Arrangements	35
10.	Statutory Social Work Functions for Children in Care & Care Leavers	35
10.1.	Leaving & After Care Support for care leavers formerly 'permanently' placed with 'in-house' carers	37
11.	Expected Service Developments	38
11.1.	Improving support to Child Arrangement and Special Guardianship Order Cares	38
11.2.	Encouraging Foster Carers to seek Special Guardianship Order s	39
11.3.	Improving Support for Children Returning Home from Care	39
11.4.	Developing Capacity within the Family Group Conferencing Service	39

<b>Section</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Page</b>
12.	Service User Engagement	39
13.	Information and Communication Technology	41
14.	General Practice Standards	41
14.1.	Record keeping	41
14.1.1.	Statutory Practitioner Records	41
14.1.2.	Record Keeping by Carers	42
14.2.	Safeguarding	43
14.3.	Children and Young People Missing from Care	45
15.	Finance, budgets & Reporting Arrangements	45
15.1.	Savings to be Achieved	47
15.2.	Transparency	48
15.3.	Managing Cost Pressures	49
15.3.1	Managing general cost pressures	49
15.3.2.	Increased costs arising from an increase in numbers of children in care	50
15.3.3.	Unexpected increased use of 'Low volume High cost' placements	51
15.3.4.	General actions to prepare for and avoid in-year cost pressures	52
15.3.5.	Accounting and reporting arrangements	52
16.	Governance and Quality Assurance	53
16.1.	Governance Arrangements	53
16.2.	Quality Performance Indicators and Performance Reporting	56
16.2.1.	Purpose	56
16.2.2	Principles	56
16.2.3.	Data Platforms	58
17.	Decision Making Arrangements & Practice Issues Dispute Resolution	65
18.	Relationships with other Partners and other Agencies	66
19.	Contract Escalation Procedures	67
19.1.	In the Event of Contract Expiry or Termination	67
20.	Expected Characteristics of a Successful Partner	68
21.	Possible areas for further post award negotiation	68
22.	Intellectual Property Rights – Permanency Service	69

## Glossary

The following table contains information about the abbreviations contained within this report.

<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Full Title</b>	<b>Explanatory Notes</b>
ADM	Agency Decision Maker	The senior officer making decisions on the basis of recommendations from the Fostering or Adoption panel.
CCG	Clinical Commissioning Group	The lead body for commissioning health services. The CCG may contribute towards the costs of placements for children in care where these placements are meeting health needs that cannot be met in the community.
DFE	Department for Education	
DSG	Dedicated Schools Grant	Funding that is top sliced from schools' budgets and used to fund support packages for pupils with complex needs. In the context of the Permanency Service, DSG funding contributes to some residential placement costs. DSG funding cannot be transferred from the local Authority.
EDS	Emergency Duty Service	The Emergency Duty Service is provided by Cambridgeshire County Council and provides out of hours' cover for Statutory children's and adult services.
IFA	Independent Fostering Agency	IFA carers refers to foster carers providing foster placements for the Council or for the Permanency Service that are sourced from independent fostering agencies.
'In house' carers	N/A	The group of foster carers who are supported by the Council and who would transfer to a new provider, together with new foster carers recruited as a result of this new arrangement by the Permanency Service.
IRO	Independent Reviewing Officer	Also known in Peterborough as Independent Chairs, IROs have statutory accountability for ensuring that care plans for children in care are effective and meet their needs. They also play an important role in ensuring that plans progress appropriately.
JASP	Joint Agency Support Panel	The panel chaired by the Service Director for children and safeguarding that discusses children and young people with the most complex needs where support from a combination of Children's Social Care, Education and Health will be required. The provider will be required to attend this monthly panel.
LADO	Local Authority Designated Officer	The officer within the Council responsible for the coordination of enquiries required where a professional or carer is the subject of allegations or other safeguarding concerns.

<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Full Title</b>	<b>Explanatory Notes</b>
Link Carer	N/A	Foster carers who provide short breaks for children and young people with disabilities
PASP	Peterborough Access to Support Panel	The panel chaired by the Assistant Director for Children's Social Care that discusses high level resource requests and is the form where admissions into the care system are agreed. The provider will be required to be represented at this panel which sits weekly.
STC	Secure Training Centre	Used for secure remands of young people accused of involvement in serious offences; typically when offender is either younger [i.e. under 16] or has particular vulnerabilities – see also YOI
'the provider'	N/A	Shorthand for the organisation that will deliver the Permanency Service on behalf of the Council under this specification.
YOI	Young Offender Institute	Used for secure remands of young people accused of involvement in serious offences; typically when older [i.e. 16 and above] where there are no particular vulnerabilities – see also STC

# Peterborough Permanency Service

## 1. An Innovative, Child-Centred Commissioning Relationship

Peterborough City Council staff, foster and adoptive carers are working together to develop a new delivery model that is focused on securing permanency for children and young people in care, or who may become looked after unless extended family can provide a permanent and sustainable alternative.

The scope of the proposals within this service specification is very wide, including all of the Council's Fostering and Adoption Services, the Family Group Conference Service, and some limited statutory social work functions for a particular group of children in care or for whom assessments of potential special guardians are required.

As well as significant numbers of members of staff transferring to the new service, the entire budget associated with placement costs for children in care, those who are staying put, or who are receiving support packages under adoption, special guardianship and child arrangement orders would transfer to the commissioned organisation together with our foster carers, prospective and actual adopters under this new arrangement.

These arrangements bring both potential gains and risk to the Council and stakeholders. We have to get this right, not only for our staff and carers but most importantly, so that we deliver the best outcomes for our children and young people. So although this is a commissioning led process, we will require joint governance arrangements to be in place, with a joint governance board chaired by the Director of Children's Services monitoring performance and offering support in the event of any indication of emerging difficulties.

But we also want this new service to have the freedom to innovate. We are transferring the cost of our current placement mix, and the full staff cost associated with recruiting, assessing and supporting our fostering and adoptive carers. We are providing the new service with an initial budget that is equivalent to the cost of delivering these services ourselves. However, we do need to make savings on current overall costs, and these will be built in to budgets for future financial years. We also need to see investment in specific areas if we are to secure improved outcomes for children and young people, and this is why the new provider will need to innovate; in reducing unit costs to enable investment and deliver savings.

It is the strength of the Peterborough brand, together with the combined assets of our foster carers, adopters and staff, brought together with innovation and investment by a new provider that we are confident will generate the savings and allow the development of the new service areas outlined in this specification.

The contract length will be 10 years with an option to extend. This is a 'Permanency Service'; any shorter contract would not be in line with our ambitions to demonstrate that we can deliver successful permanency for more of our children and young people in care.

Staff, foster carers, adopters, children and young people have been widely involved in developing these proposals. Their aspirations for the proposed permanency service have informed this service specification, and they will form part of the formal evaluation process of submitted tenders.

## 2. About these Proposals

Peterborough City Council [the 'Council' or 'We'] is determined to improve outcomes for children and young people who come into care. We want to improve support for children and young people who become looked after and then return home to their families, and increase the number of children and young people who experience permanency through Adoption, Special Guardianship and Child Arrangement Orders, or who benefit from long term 'permanent' foster care.

For those children and young people who are looked after and placed with foster carers, we want to ensure that as many as possible are placed with 'in-house' carers. This is because we know our carers better than those who are provided by external agencies. Our carers tend to be located in Peterborough or in the surrounding area, meaning that children and young people can more easily maintain relationships with family and friendship networks, continue to attend local schools and benefit from other local support services.

We want to ensure that our carers are trained and supported so that they are sufficiently confident to look after children and young people with more challenging needs, enabling this group to benefit from stable family placements that are closer to the City, where they can continue in their education and training, and maintain links with family and friendship groups. Our carers have told us that in order to look after this group of highly vulnerable children and young people, they need:

- Access to a bespoke evidence-based training programme;
- Access to improved levels of support that includes 24/7 support and where necessary, practical support in the home;
- Access to improved support to help them to understand the psychological aspects of providing child-centred care to children and young people displaying problematic and challenging behaviour associated with past abuse, neglect or disorganised attachments.

In common with all local authorities, there are significant resource pressures in Peterborough. Investing in the provision of enhanced support services would ordinarily mean that we would need to identify savings elsewhere in the system. One area where savings can be made that can be re-invested in outcomes for children and young people, is in reducing our reliance on higher cost placements for children and young people in care – specifically, residential placements and placements with external fostering agencies.

Despite some success in recruiting in-house foster carers and in maintaining relatively low numbers of children and young people in care who are placed in residential provision, we have come to the conclusion that the best chance of achieving our ambitions to deliver a step change in outcomes for children and young people, is to develop a commissioning relationship with an external partner who can bring both complementary expertise and initial investment to services in Peterborough.

The table below summarises the proposed responsibilities of the Council and Provider in relation to current services and resources, under the arrangements set out in this specification:

Peterborough City Council will retain responsibility for:	The Provider, through the Permanency Service will acquire responsibility for:
<p>Most Statutory services relating to children in need, child protection and children looked after, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessments of children in need;</li> <li>• Social work functions relating to children in need, in need of protection and most children who are looked after [see below];</li> <li>• Most leaving and aftercare services;</li> </ul>	<p>The Fostering &amp; Adoption Service, involving the TUPE transfer of staff and activities including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruitment of fostering and adoptive carers;</li> <li>• Support and training activities for staff &amp; carers;</li> <li>• Operation and management of panels;</li> <li>• Agency decision maker responsibilities as applying to adopters and foster carers;</li> <li>• Post adoption support functions;</li> <li>• Private fostering;</li> <li>• Non-agency adoption;</li> <li>• Oversight of medicals for adopters &amp; foster carers</li> </ul>
<p>Agency Decision Maker role as this relates to Children and Young People</p>	<p>Foster carers &amp; adopters currently approved by the Council</p>
<p>Conference chairs, looked after reviewing officers</p>	<p>Assessments of eligibility for allowances and all payments to carers</p>
<p>Audit and quality assurance functions</p>	<p>The Placement Finding Service</p>
<p>Supervised contact functions</p>	<p>The Family Group Conference Service</p>
<p>Resource Panels</p>	<p>Assessments of carers seeking Child Arrangement or Special Guardianship Orders, as currently undertaken by the Council's Fostering &amp; Adoption Service</p>
<p>Missing from home and care coordinator</p>	<p>A small proportion of statutory social work functions for children looked after and leaving care services [see below]</p>
<p>Responsibility for facilitating effective Children in Care Council</p>	<p>Some Children in Care/Leaving Care Participation Responsibilities</p>
<p>Advocacy Services</p>	<p>Placement budgets for children in care:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fees and Allowances for in-house carers;</li> <li>• Budget for IFA foster placements;</li> <li>• Sole funded residential placements;</li> <li>• Council budget contribution to joint funded residential placements – i.e. funding for these placements from Dedicated Schools Grant and health partners will not transfer;</li> <li>• All other placement related budgets as set out in section 15 including assessment and payment of adoption and other allowances;</li> </ul> <p>All other relevant budgets associated with running services of transfer to Permanency Service including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The operation of panels;</li> <li>• Staffing budgets including subsistence and travel.</li> </ul>
<p>Oversight of Complaints and in particular complaints under the Statutory children's complaints process.</p>	<p>Management of complaints about the service.</p>
	<p>Ensuring policies and procedures relating to the Permanency Service remain updated in line with legislation and research</p>

### 3. About Peterborough

Peterborough covers an area of 340km<sup>2</sup> at the western edge of the Fens in the east of England. The authority is bordered by Cambridgeshire to the south and east, Northamptonshire and Rutland to the west and Lincolnshire to the north. Approximately three-quarters of the authority area is rural, containing villages ranging in size from 150 to 4000 people, with the city of Peterborough lying in the geographical centre of the Peterborough City Council area. The great majority of the population of Peterborough live in the urban City area.

#### 3.1 About the Population of Peterborough

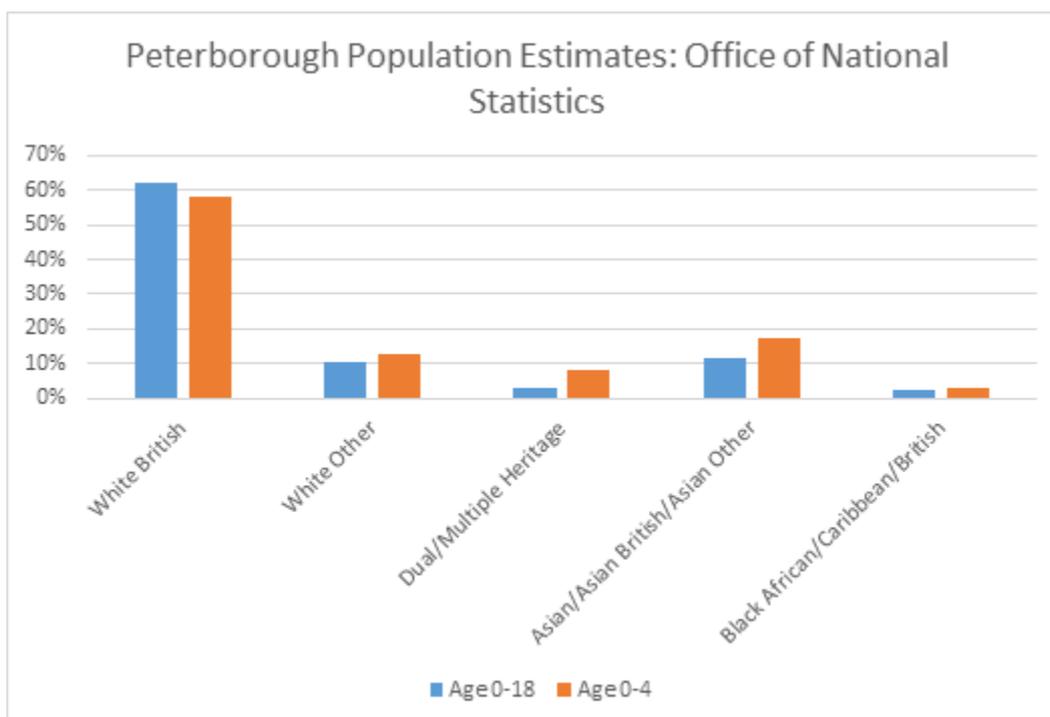
The population of Peterborough City Council is estimated to be around 188,000 and the City is the second fastest growing in the country. The child population is also among the fastest growing in the country. The City's population is becoming increasingly diverse, with diversity greatest among younger age groups and the population of children and young people.

The population has become increasingly diverse in part as a result of the accession of the A10 countries which has seen a notable increase in the number of European citizens moving to Peterborough. The current population of Peterborough is approximately 70% White British, 11% White Other around 7% of the population is Asian or Asian British Pakistani. More than 100 languages are spoken in Peterborough schools.

The City Council boundary contains a diverse mixture of residential neighbourhoods, rural and inner-city wards and wards that contain elements of each of these characteristics. The 2015 Index of Multiple Deprivation illustrates that levels of deprivation vary significantly throughout Peterborough. The population of the City is more concentrated in areas of higher deprivation, with 62,000 people living in areas of the City that are among the 20% most deprived areas of the country. The impact of relatively high levels of deprivation can be seen in the average healthy life expectancy for both men and women, which is significantly shorter than national averages.

There are approximately 45,000 children and young people aged 0-17 in Peterborough. Levels of child poverty in Peterborough are high, with around 12,000 children and young people living in poverty. Around 350 children and young people are looked after at any one time, with a further 250 subject to child protection plans and around 1,000 who are assessed as being children in need.

As noted above, the City's population is becoming increasingly diverse, and this diversity is greatest among younger ages. The chart below compares the Office of National Statistics' estimates for proportions of the 0-18 and 0-4 populations in the City by ethnicity:



### 3.2 About Children’s Services and Adoption and Fostering in Peterborough

A structure chart for the current Fostering and Adoption Service and its’ links with the broader Children’s Social Care Service is provided at Appendix 1.

There are approximately 140 active fostering households in Peterborough, of which the great majority [around 90%] are from white British backgrounds. The current mix of fostering households is less culturally and religiously diverse than the population of children and young people in care, of whom around 65% are from white British backgrounds.

A number of fostering households are located in the rural areas surrounding the City and some are located just beyond City boundaries in neighbouring authority areas. This geographical spread of households is helpful in terms of placement matching, while allowing for children and young people to maintain links with schools, family and communities as appropriate to their needs.

The mix of active fostering households is not currently in line with the population of children and young people in care. Vacancy rates among fostering households are higher than might be expected to be the case, with proportionately more carers seeking to offer homes to younger children, and a relative shortage of carers seeking to offer homes to older children and young people coming into care for the first time.

This element of overcapacity has the potential to be harnessed by a provider able to inspire confidence among carers to accept placements of older young people and children who have more complex needs – both groups who are currently more likely to be fostered by carers provided by Independent Fostering Agencies.

There are relatively few children and young people placed with connected carers in Peterborough, in comparison with national averages. Connected carers are entitled to the same levels of support as ‘mainstream’ foster carers. They are mostly in receipt of level 1 fostering allowances [which are as

set out in section 6.1.3], but are able to access higher levels of allowance, in the same way as mainstream foster carers.

Few private foster carers are known to agencies in Peterborough, despite efforts to raise awareness of private fostering in the City.

## 4. Views of Key Stakeholders about these Proposals

### 4.1 Children and Young People

There are a number of comments from children and young people weaved throughout this service specification. Children and young people are concerned about living in stable homes, with carers who are committed to promoting their long-term best interests. Where possible, children and young people want to live in families who share similar cultural, linguistic, faith and other characteristics as their birth families.

They want social workers who work with them to take their views seriously. They do not want to be separated from their siblings and most want to maintain contact with their birth families. Most want to continue living in or near to Peterborough.

The views and aspirations of children and young people have directly informed this service

### 4.2 Foster carers

Foster carers have been mostly welcoming of these proposals to develop a new way of delivering services to children and young people in care.

Foster carers are particularly interested in the potential for them to be able to access better quality training, more responsive support services and improved access to psychological advice and consultation in respect of meeting the needs of children and young people placed with them. They are interested in how they may be able to use their skills and abilities in new ways in order to support children, young people and their families.

They have some anxieties about the potential impact on staff and are worried about an increase in staff turnover. They do not want to lose the special relationship with the Council and the access that they have to senior officers. Most of all, foster carers do not want to see any new service fail, and will work with the Council and provider to ensure that it is successful.

The views and aspirations of foster carers for a new Permanency Service have directly informed this specification.

### 4.3 Members of Staff

Members of staff have been cautiously welcoming of the proposal to establish a new Permanency Service. They are interested in the potential for service developments and innovation that a new service may be able to provide. Staff also recognise the potential in terms of improved outcomes for children and young people, particularly in respect of the areas of investment within these proposals and the potential to place more of our children and young people with carers we know well and for whom they are directly responsible.

Staff are keen to know about opportunities for them in terms of career development as a result of the development of the Permanency Service. They are reassured by the fact that they will remain physically located with the remainder of the Council's children's services, meaning that communication and relationships will be maintained.

There are some anxieties about the specific details of the new service, including around the impact on areas of current good performance, and a concern that this is maintained. There are also a number of questions that staff understandably have about the impact on their own terms and conditions that may arise as a result of the new arrangements.

The views and aspirations of members of staff for a new Permanency Service as expressed by our members of staff have informed this specification.

## 5. General Arrangements for Service Delivery

### 5.1 Adherence to Legislation and Statutory Guidance

The Permanency Service will adhere to the requirements of legislation and statutory guidance throughout the period of the contract, and will adapt practices and processes in accordance with any changes. Key legislation relevant to the delivery of the Permanency Service includes:

- The Children Act 1989 and in particular statutory guidance relating to:
  - The Children Act: Guidance and Regulations Volume 1: Court Orders 2008;
  - The Children Act: Guidance and Regulations Volume 2: Care Planning, Placement and Case Review 2015;
  - The Children Act: Guidance and Regulations Volume 3: Planning Transition to Adulthood for care Leavers 2010;
  - The Children Act: Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services 2011.
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review [England] Regulations 2010, as amended by:
  - The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services [Miscellaneous Amendments] Regulations, 2013;
  - Adoption and care Planning [Miscellaneous Amendments] Regulations 2014;
  - The Care Planning and Fostering [Miscellaneous Amendments] Regulations 2015.
- The Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and the Fostering Services National Minimum Standards 2011;
- Family and Friends' Care: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities 2011;
- Short Breaks: Statutory Guidance on how to Safeguard and Promote the Welfare of Disabled Children using Short Breaks [2010];
- The Children [Leaving Care] Act 2000;
- Staying Put: Arrangements for Care Leavers aged 18 and above 2013;
- Sufficiency: Statutory Guidance on Securing Sufficient Accommodation for Looked After Children 2010;
- The Adoption and Children Act 2002;
- Statutory Guidance on Adoption for Local Authorities, Voluntary Adoption Agencies, and Adoption Support Agencies 2013;
- The Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005 [as amended by the Adoption and Care Planning [Miscellaneous Amendments] Regulations 2014];
- The National Minimum Standards for Adoption 2014;
- The Children and Young Person's Act 2008 including the Children and Young Person's Act 2008 [Relevant Care Functions] [England] Regulations 2014 and Statutory Instrument 2014 Number 2407;
- The Children and Families' Act 2014;
- The Special Guardianship Regulations 2005.

In addition, the contracted provider will be required to adhere to the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998 and to Caldecott Guidance in respect of information held, regardless of whether this is held electronically or as part of manual records.

The above list is not exhaustive but sets out the main legislative framework under which the Permanency Service will operate. The overall aims and objectives of the Permanency Service are not deliverables that can be found in any single piece of legislation or guidance. The overarching principle of delivery of the service is that it offers a child centred service that delivers to at least the minimum statutory requirement in all areas of delivery.

The Permanency Service will adhere to Peterborough policies and procedures as these relate to children and young people on transfer of the services to the provider. Policies and procedures can be amended in due course, subject to appropriate consultation with the Council, and any affected stakeholders including children, young people, carers and key partners. Current Peterborough procedures can be found at:

<http://www.proceduresonline.com/peterborough/>

The local safeguarding children board procedures can be found at:

<http://www.peterboroughlscb.org.uk/procedures/>

It is assumed that the above will apply to all relevant areas described within this service specification.

## 5.2 Human Resources Issues including Safer Recruitment

The provider is required to have in place robust HR processes that cover key areas including management of poor performance, the raising of employee concerns including through grievance and whistleblowing processes, and the effective management of any safeguarding concerns relating to members of staff. Where safeguarding concerns arise in respect of a member of staff of the Permanency Service, the service will ensure that it follows the requirements of the Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board child protection procedures and work openly and proactively with the Local Authority Designated Officer as appropriate. Further information can be found in section 14.2.

All HR processes, including those relating to safeguarding concerns, are to be managed fairly and thoroughly, but without unnecessary delay.

These processes will include the requirement that all members of staff are recruited through a selection process that follows the recommendations of the Bishard enquiry in terms of safer recruitment.

The provider will have in place a clear workforce strategy that will set out how employees will be motivated, recognised, developed and managed to ensure an engaged and highly performing workforce.

The provider will also be required to have in place effective processes for managing allegations made against foster and prospective adoptive carers. These processes must meet the requirements of the Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board child protection procedures. The procedures must ensure that children and young people are safeguarded, while also ensuring that carers are provided with appropriate support. The provider will need to work openly and proactively with the Local Authority Designated Officer where appropriate, and support a thorough but expedited resolution to allegations against carers. See Section 14.2 for further information.

It is assumed that the above will apply to all relevant areas described within this service specification.

### 5.3 Inclusivity of this Service Specification

This service specification is intended to cover all areas of operation of the service included within the responsibility of the proposed Permanency Service.

While every care has been taken to ensure that all key areas of operation are covered, it is likely that there will be areas that require further clarification. Bidders will have an opportunity to clarify elements of the service specification during the tender process.

There will be an opportunity post contract award and during the mobilisation period to confirm any areas of operation covered by the specification that emerge as lacking the necessary detail or clarity.

Where this is the case, the presumption that applies is that all areas that would reasonably be expected to be provided by either the provider or the Council in respect of their responsibilities for the Permanency Service or the operation of general children's services will be undertaken without the requirement for additional funding.

The escalation process for managing contractual issues will be followed where it is not possible for the Council and provider to reach agreement on such issues. See the terms and conditions set out in the contractual dispute mechanism for further information.

## 6. Functions included within this Service Specification

### 6.1. Fostering and Adoption Services

#### 6.1.1. Members of Staff

All social workers, the Agency Adviser, two panel administrators and the two team managers, will transfer to a new provider under TUPE. A complete list of posts, including staffing costs and pension liabilities may be found in the relevant schedule of the contract.

Business support functions are currently carried out by a contract between the Council and SERCO. The current administrative staff provided by SERCO to support the Fostering and Adoption Service will also transfer to the permanency Service under TUPE. These staff are listed in the TUPE information as 'Third Party Employees'.

#### 6.1.2 Fostering Services

The new service is required to operate a comprehensive fostering service that at comprehensively meets the requirements of the Fostering National Minimum Standards, 2011 and any subsequent legislative or statutory guidance that comes into force during the contract period.

**'To never be separated from my brother'**

Primary school aged child asked what they would wish for about their care

Key outcomes required from the new service include:

- Successful recruitment and retention of carers able to meet the needs of children and young people with more complex needs [and in particular, able to care for teenagers and sibling groups] in order that reliance on IFA placements is reduced;
- Successful recruitment of 'Link' carers – i.e. foster carers able to provide regular short breaks for children and young people with disabilities;

- Successful retention of existing foster carers;
- Successful recruitment of foster carers from all sections of the diverse communities of Peterborough;
- Promotion of Child Arrangement or Special Guardianship Orders for children placed in long term foster care, where this is in line with their best interests.

The specific responsibilities of the Fostering Service that transfer to the new service include:

- All duties and responsibilities set out within the Fostering National Minimum Standards and all other relevant legislation;
- Recruitment, assessment, training, annual reviews and support of foster carers including relative or connected carers;
- Statutory private fostering responsibilities including awareness raising of requirement for private foster carers to be assessed;
- Arrangements for ensuring that foster carers receive timely payments of allowances and annual statements of accounts;
- Operation and management of fostering panels;
- Promotion of 'Staying Put' arrangements.

Our foster carers have told us that in order to accept children and young people who have more challenging needs and who are currently more likely to be placed with

Independent Fostering Agency carers, they need to feel more confident in the support and training that they are able to access.

Accordingly, in addition to the minimum requirements as set out within the Fostering National Minimum Standards, the provider will be required to deliver:

- Access to support 24/7 including in-placement practical support where needed for foster carers;
- Access to an evidenced based training package that will equip foster carers with the skills and knowledge to meet common needs including disorganised attachments and to deal with the effects of trauma, abuse and neglect for foster carers;
- Access to psychological consultation to foster carers them to support children and young people in placement for foster carers;
- Support to include consideration of the needs of foster carers' birth children.

Peterborough is a diverse multi-cultural City and there will be occasions when children and young people will need to be placed with foster carers with whom they do not share a common language. The Permanency Service will be required to facilitate access to translation services for foster carers for use when other approaches fail.

### 6.1.3. Detail of current Fostering Households

The tables below set out the fostering allowances payable to carers as from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016. With the exception of the 'Contract Care' rates, the fees and allowances are paid according to the experience and level of training of the carer, rather than being related to the needs of the child.

'Staff stability is what has made Peterborough such a good agency and this must be maintained.... We need to know the staff who support us....'

Peterborough foster carer

Level 1	
Age of Child	Weekly Payment
0-4	145.44
5-10	165.68
11-16	206.23
16+	250.84
Level 2	
0-4	197.59
5-10	219.02
11-16	247.74
16+	278.28
Level 3	
0-4	243.51
5-10	265.01
11-16	293.66
16+	315.52
Contract Care	
0-4	388.25
5-10	407.88
11-16	447.01
16+	490.06

An additional payment of one week at Level 1 is paid for birthday, Christmas and Summer Holidays – these payments are not paid to former agency carers as these are assumed to be part of the higher weekly payment that they receive.

Contract care rates are paid when a child or young person has particularly complex needs. They are paid in only a very small number of scenarios, where a child or young person has very complex care needs arising from a disability, for example. As of 1<sup>st</sup> February 2016, there were 8 children and young people for whom contract care allowances are paid.

Where foster carers have transferred from Independent Fostering Agencies to Peterborough, there is an agreement in place that guarantees to match the allowances that they were receiving for two years and, for Peterborough children in placement at the time of the transfer, to match the allowances until those children reach 18. There are currently 18 fostering households covered by such agreements.

Supported Lodgings carer are paid at the same rate as Level 1 carers for the age group 16+, less an assumed £30 per week contribution from the young person and Staying Put rates are paid at a total of £239.52 less a Housing Benefit contribution of £91.15 and a contribution from the young person of £30, resulting in a net cost of £118.37 per week. These rates apply regardless of whether the foster placement was previously an in-house or IFA placement.

The table below sets out the number of fostering households at the different levels as of February 2016 [Level 1, 2 and 3]:

Payment Level	Number of Fostering Households
Level 1	47
Level 2	24
Level 3	52

Alternative [IFA transfers]	18
Supported Lodgings	3
Special Rate	1

In addition to the allowances set out above, foster carers are able to claim some additional payments covering, for example, transport costs in certain situations. Budgets covering such incidentals will transfer to the Permanency Service.

Paid respite care is not usually available and is only provided where this is in the best interests of the child or young person concerned. Where such arrangements exist, they are generally capped at 14 nights. Such arrangements apply to between 5% and 10% of children and young people in in-house fostering placements at any one time.

Carers are able to claim retainer fees in some circumstances. Full details of allowances are contained within the Foster Carer’s Handbook, which can be found at:

<https://issuu.com/peterboroughfostering/docs/fosteringhandbook/1>

#### 6.1.4. Transfer of Foster Carers

It is envisaged that foster carers would transfer to the new provider following the mobilisation of the contract. Dispensation will be requested from the Department for Education to allow this to happen over a period of time so that formal transfer is agreed by the relevant panel at the time of the household’s annual review, or within 6 months from the mobilisation date.

Foster carers who transfer to the new provider will not become part of the general pool of fostering households operated by the new provider. They will remain a defined group of households that only offer placements for children and young people in care to Peterborough, except with the express permission of the Council. This will usually be as a result of agreement at the Joint Governance Board, but in urgent situations where the case concerns a single placement or sibling placement, agreement can be provided on behalf of the Council by the commissioning lead.

All fostering households recruited by the new provider through this agreement will join this defined group of carers offering placements to Peterborough children and young people only.

These arrangements are necessary in order that the special relationship between Peterborough City Council and our fostering households is not diluted.

In the event that the contract is terminated or comes to an end, the expectation is that all fostering households who remain active and who transferred to the new provider at the commencement of the contract, and all those who are recruited as a result of the contract, will transfer back to Peterborough City Council, recognising that foster carers are free to make other arrangements in terms of which agency they choose to be registered. The exit strategy within the terms and conditions provides the details of these arrangements.

#### 6.1.5. Summary of Fostering Services to be provided

The following section describes the main expectations of the provider in delivering effective fostering services on behalf of Peterborough City Council through this agreement. This section is not exhaustive but seeks to describe the key features of a high quality, outcomes focused and child-centred approach to the delivery of fostering services.

Key legislative and statutory guidance requirements relating to the delivery of fostering services are as set out in The Children Act 1989 Guidance Volumes 2, 3 and 4; The Fostering Services Regulations

2011 and The Fostering Services National Minimum Standards 2011 [and any legislation or guidance that may replace them]; as supplemented by the contents of this service specification.

### **Assessment of Carers**

On completion of the two stage fostering assessment process, the full range of information is considered by the Fostering panel, which then makes a recommendation as to whether or not the applicant/s are approved as foster carers and recommend their terms of approval. Applicants are able to attend the panel to give their views or provide in writing any views they want the panel to consider.

The recommendation of the panel is considered by the Permanency Service Agency Decision Maker, who makes the final decision.

Should any concerns about the prospective foster carers arise during any part of the process, these will be discussed with the applicants, and a second opinion interview will be arranged where appropriate.

Should issues arise during the Stage Two process that the assessing social worker or manager believe may mean that an applicant may not be approved by panel, a 'brief report' may be presented to the panel, setting out the concerns. Applicants may make representations in writing or in person to the panel in these circumstances.

Where the panel recommends that an assessment should not be completed, the Permanency Service Agency Decision Maker will make a 'qualifying determination' and inform the applicant of their options. Applicants are entitled to ask for the application to be reconsidered by the panel or to proceed to an Independent Review Mechanism. The recommendation of the subsequent adoption panel or of the Independent Review Mechanism is then referred back to the Permanency Service Agency Decision Maker who will consider all the information and reach a final decision.

### **Provision of High Quality and well supported Foster Placements**

The Permanency Service will adhere to exceed the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services through innovative care practices and demonstrate a commitment to continuous improvement through internal quality assurance procedures, monitoring and service development planning.

Foster placements provided by the Permanency Service will be for the sole use of children and young people in care to Peterborough City Council, except where there is specific agreement with the Council to provide assistance to other local authorities, for which the Permanency Service will make a charge to the other authority to reflect the placement and support costs.

Foster carers will be recruited to the Service in accordance with the requirements of the National Minimum Standards and in particular to Standard 13 – recruiting and assessing foster carers who can meet the needs of looked after children. The Service will therefore ensure that:

'Nothing can really prepare you for the first time you have a foster child in your home... But we had a brilliant social worker and the numbers of other carers we could call... and it worked out fine. Now we are able to support new carers as they start out.....'

.....

Foster carer on support

- The principles of Safer Recruitment and equal opportunities are adhered to in the recruitment of foster carers;
- Appropriate levels of Disclosure and Barring Service checks are undertaken in respect of all adult members of the fostering household and any regular visitors to that household and that these are maintained up to date;
- All fostering households are provided with an initial training programme during the recruitment and assessment process and are offered regular training opportunities in accordance with their on-going development needs during their career as foster carers. This training to include child development and safeguarding as a minimum requirement;
- All foster carers are provided with up to date information about the expectations upon them as foster carers acting on behalf of the Local Authority via a Foster Carer Handbook [which may be available as an on-line resource].

Foster Carers recruited by the Service will be able to meet a wide range of needs as exhibited by children and young people in care. While there will always be a need for a number of carers to provide placements for younger children and young people with less complex needs, a significant number of carers recruited to the service will be able to appropriately care for and support children and young people exhibiting a range of more complex behaviours. Such behaviours may include: persistent absconding; offending behaviour requiring on-going support from other agencies; emotional and mental health issues requiring support from other agencies, sexually problematic behaviour that may pose a risk to themselves and others; those who display disorganised attachments and those that may have been abused or neglected and require on-going treatment/support.

The Permanency Service will place particular attention on recruiting a diverse range of foster carers, able to meet the culturally and ethnically diverse population of children and young people of Peterborough.

Recruitment of 'Link' carers able to provide family based short breaks for children and young people with disabilities is a key priority area for the Council and the Permanency Service will work with the Council's short breaks service and social work service for children and young people with disabilities in order to recruit carers able to meet the needs of this group.

'Coming into care at the beginning was just horrible because I didn't see my family at home and because I am from a different country moving to an English family is not easy because you have to change the culture one to another.... I cannot see most of my family because they still live in my home country'

Young person describing their experience of care

Foster carers recruited to the service must be able to develop positive and effective working relationships with all those who play a significant role in the lives of children and young people placed with them. These will include their family and friends, social worker and other professionals and services including schools, colleges and health services.

Educational and learning outcomes are particularly important in terms of securing long term outcomes for children and young people. Foster carers recruited to the service will therefore be required to promote learning and training for children and young people placed with them, which

will include supporting them to complete homework and helping them to consider appropriate learning or training needs in order to meet career aspirations.

Foster carers will deliver supervised care and accommodation 24 hours per day, seven days per week, 365 days per year for each child or young person placed with them.

The Permanency Service will have a duty of care for the child or young person placed with one of their foster carers from the time they are welcomed into the foster carer's home until they leave in a planned and sensitive manner to return to the care of their parent/s or extended family, an adoptive household, to another foster carer, or to move on to independence.

The time in placement will be a positive, stimulating and worthwhile experience for children and young people who will be cared for within safe, appropriate home-environments with age appropriate activities, outings and positive relationships and interactions.

The Council will keep the Permanency Service and the foster carers informed of relevant developments that may have an impact on the child or young person in placement or the placement itself and in particular, any changes in the family circumstances of the child or young person and the progress of any legal proceedings.

The Permanency Service will not make any changes to the placement as agreed in child's placement plan, including the arrangement of any additional respite care, without first consulting the Council [which will usually mean the child's Social Worker or Team Manager]. Where any changes being considered have an impact on the progress of the child's care plan, the child's Independent Reviewing Officer must also be consulted.

Foster carers and their Supervising Social Worker will be expected to attend all necessary meetings, conferences and reviews in respect of the child or young person placed with them, including pre-placement planning meetings.

The Permanency Service will ensure that foster carers are provided with the level of support appropriate to maintain the placement. This will be achieved by ensuring that a stable team of Supervising Social Workers is maintained who are sufficiently qualified and experienced. These workers should have access to specialist training appropriate to their role.

In addition to the requirements relating to the support of foster carers set out in the Fostering National Minimum Standards, the Permanency Service will also provide:

- Access to psychological support and consultation in order to help foster carers to manage challenging or difficult behaviour and to develop strategies to help the child or young person develop more positive behaviours and social interaction;
- Access to support including out of hours support on a 24/7 basis, which will include practical in-home support when this is necessary;

'Being part of a football club'

'Having a laugh with my carers'

'Playing in a band'

'Being trusted by my carers.... And horse-riding'

'I like where I live with my foster carers'

Children and young people in care asked 'What is good about your life?'

- A high quality evidence-based training and development programme for foster carers including in relation to disorganised attachment, parent and child placements, recovery from trauma etc. Training offered will have an evidence base in terms of improving outcomes for children and young people;
- Access to translation services for foster carers when this is necessary to communicate with a child or young person placed with them who does not share a first language.

Foster carers currently enjoy free access to local Leisure facilities through the Council's contract with the relevant provider, Vivacity. The cost of this is heavily subsidised and the package is highly valued by carers. The cost of this arrangement is met from the budgets transferring to the Permanency Service and this form of support will expect to be continued. The Council will ensure that the current preferential rates offered by Vivacity continue following the establishment of the Permanency Service.

Foster carers will maintain a written record of key events in the child or young person's life during their placement. Such events will include:

- A daily log that records general observations about the progress of the child or young person;
- Notes of any significant events including contact with birth family members;
- Any incidents of challenging behaviour;
- All positive events that take place, such as positive reports from school or positive engagement in social or other activities, hobbies and so on.

The record should be written so that it provides a general overview of the progress made by the child or young person in the placement while providing a historical record that is available to the child or young person in later life.

The provider is expected to ensure that foster carers are facilitated to maintain this record securely and, wherever possible, electronically.

The fostering handbook provided to all fostering households must be kept regularly updated and set out the expectations of foster carers in relation to a wide range of issues, including managing challenging behaviour, rewards and sanctions, life story work, involvement in contact and what to do should any child or young person in placement be missing for any period of time.

At the point of mobilisation of the contract, the terms of the existing Peterborough foster carer handbook will apply. The Permanency Service may seek to make changes to the provision of the handbook, but will ensure that changes are consulted upon with carers and the Council through the appropriate governance arrangements as set out in section 16.1 below.

The provider will ensure that a delegation of authority to foster carers' protocol is in place, the provisions of which are agreed with the Council, and that the provisions of this protocol are reviewed regularly.

The Permanency Service will ensure that all fostering households are subject to an annual review in accordance with the requirements of the National Minimum Standards.

Where foster placements appear at risk of coming to an unplanned end, additional support will be offered to the child or young person looked after and the foster placement via a placement stability meeting to include all key stakeholders including the child's social worker, carers and supervising social worker, and any partner agencies able to provide additional support to maintain the placement.

Except where continuing a placement may result in serious safeguarding concerns or the risk of the committal of serious offences, placements will be subject to a 28 day notice period to enable placement moves to take place in a planned way. No placement moves will take place without full involvement and consultation with the child's social worker and independent reviewing officer.

No child should move placement without the agreement of the Council [which in effect means the head of service responsible for the child's case management] except in urgent situations outside office hours where continuing a placement may result in serious safeguarding concerns or the risk of the committal of serious offences. In these circumstances, placement moves are to be discussed with the Council's out of hours' Emergency Duty Service, which may in turn consult with the senior officer providing on call cover for the Council.

**Parent and Child Placements:** Where the foster placement is offered to a parent or parents as well as their child or children, the child or children must be recognised as the primary users of the service.

The Permanency Service will ensure that the foster carer provides observation, supervision and opportunities for parents to develop their parenting abilities. Foster carers will also support parents to access community based and statutory services.

The Permanency Service will ensure that all foster carers offering parent and child placements have an understanding of emotional attachment and the ability to encourage bonding between parent and their child.

Advice about parenting skills will be given by foster carers in a clear and objective manner to parents, and foster carers will provide clear feedback to parents about their strengths and areas for improvement. Such advice and guidance will need to be recorded, along with general observations, and such recording may be required in court proceedings.

Foster carers offering parent and child placements will have the ability to understand, engage and manage parents who may have complex needs such as learning difficulties, poor mental health or a history of alcohol and/or substance misuse and dysfunctional relationships, including domestically abusive relationships.

'I don't like moving'

'I want to stay with my foster carers... they are kind'

'I don't want to change my [foster] family... I want to know who I am'

'I don't want to change family and trust.... I want to be trusted'

'I wouldn't change anything about my care'

Young people in foster care asked what they would not change about their care

Should a parent and child placement conclude with the need for an alternative care plan for the child, the child must be able to remain in the foster placement until a suitable alternative placement can be made.

**Promoting Permanency:** The Permanency Service will promote the making of permanent arrangements for children and young people in long term fostering placements, where this is in the best interests of the child or young person concerned.

Such arrangements are usually best achieved through the making of a Child Arrangement or Special Guardianship Order, since this offers the child or young person legal permanency. The Permanency Service will work to provide foster carers with the confidence they need to undertake such arrangements through the provision of a high level of support. Exceptional financial support packages, providing these comply with statutory guidance, can also be made. Further information can be found in Sections 11.1 and 11.2 on Child Arrangement and Special Guardianship Orders below.

‘I love where I am... it is very fun... we get to go places.... They give you confidence... I don’t want to move: this is my home...’

Young person describing their experience of foster care

If permanency is not secured through a legal option, then the Permanency Service will work with the Council to ensure the placement is formally agreed as the long term placement in line with the wishes of the child and carers, taking into account the families’ view.

**Staying Put:** The Permanency Service will promote Staying Put arrangements with in-house and IFA fostering households where such arrangements are in the best interests of the young person concerned. Current levels of payment to Staying Put carers total just under £240 per week. This total includes a housing benefit payment of £91 per week and an expected contribution by the young person of £30 per week.

Payments for former foster carers under Staying Put are set out in the Peterborough policy on Staying Put. Young people are required to claim Housing Benefit and make a small financial contribution to household expenses from their allowances, earnings or benefits.

The arrangements for financial support to former foster carers under Staying Put are the same, regardless of whether the carers were caring for the young person as ‘in-house’ or Independent Fostering Agency placements.

The budget for Staying Put will transfer to the Permanency Service, which will be responsible for ensuring that payments are made to carers in a timely way.

**Out of Hours Arrangements:** Emergency Duty Services [EDS] in Peterborough are provided under contract by Cambridgeshire County Council. A senior officer from Peterborough City Council provides on-call support to the EDS. The EDS must seek agreement from the nominated on call manager prior to any child or young person coming into care outside of office hours.

The Permanency Service will provide the EDS with a ‘Duty rota’ of foster carers available to take placements out of hours. Except where there are extended holiday periods, such as over Xmas and New Year, it is usually sufficient for one foster carer to be on duty at any one time.

The Permanency Service will ensure that there is an out of hours cover arrangement in place so that in the event of the on-call carer being unavailable or unable to accept a child out of hours, alternative arrangements can be made.

Where the Duty placement is used during the week, the Permanency Service will either ensure that the child moves to a substantive placement the next day, or provides details of an alternative carer who can provide 'Duty' cover for the next out of office hours period.

Carers who provide this service must be approved and able to accept a child or young person of any age and be able to be flexible in the event that a sibling group requires a placement.

An 'Out of Hours' payment is made to foster carers who provide this service. The current fee is £30 per 24 hour period.

**Fostering Panel:** The Permanency Service will be accountable for ensuring that a properly convened fostering panel in line with relevant regulations is in place and that this has the necessary capacity and administrative support to meet demand arising from approving new fostering households, overseeing renewals of approval and recommending permanent matches of children and young people with their foster carers.

The Fostering Panel will include representation from at least one Council social worker and one senior officer from Peterborough City Council. This officer will ensure that the quality of carers being approved by the Permanency Service is maintained at a consistently high standard, appropriate for meeting the needs of Peterborough children and young people.

The Permanency Service will ensure that a suitably senior and qualified officer acts as Agency Decision Maker for matters relating to the approval and review of approval for foster carers. Arrangements to manage differences of opinion between the ADM and the fostering panel and requests for a second opinion from prospective foster carers or carers unhappy about decision to vary or terminate their approvals will be put in place by the Permanency Service.

Permanency Matches will be agreed by the Agency Decision Maker for the Council as this relates to decisions about children and young people and this role will be retained by the Council.

Foster carers or prospective foster carers who are unhappy with any decisions relating to them in respect of their approval, termination or change to terms of approval are able to access the Independent Review Mechanism and the Permanency Service will provide information on how they can access this service.

#### 6.1.6. Fees and Allowances for Foster Carers

Foster carers have been assured that their allowances will not reduce as a result of establishing the new Permanency Service. This means that the provider will be required to continue to pay fees and allowances that are at least equivalent to those set out in Section 6.1.3 and as described in the current Fostering Handbook.

Subject to this requirement and the requirement for the provider to deliver the service within the available budget provided by the Council, the provider is free to revise fees and allowances and in particular where carers are offering new services. Any changes in fees and allowances will be preceded by full consultation with foster carers and any other relevant stakeholders.

The provider will ensure that foster carers receive accurate payments in a timely way. The provider will ensure that arrangements are in place to enable over-payments to be recouped.

The provider will be required to account for all payments made as required.

The provider will be required to provide all foster carers with an annual statement detailing all payments received over the year in order to assist in the completion of tax returns.

#### 6.1.7. Adoption Services

The Permanency Service will be required to operate a comprehensive adoption service that at least meets the requirements of the Adoption National Minimum Standards, all relevant legislation and statutory guidance, and any subsequent legislation or statutory guidance that comes into effect during the term of the contract.

Key outcomes for the service include:

- Successful recruitment of adopters able to meet the diverse needs of children in Peterborough and contribute towards regional and national requirements for adopters;
- Maintaining close working relationships with children's assessment and looked after functions operated by the Council in order to ensure that children wait for the shortest possible period before being successfully matched with adopters;
- The continued successful promotion of the Fostering for Adoption scheme in Peterborough;
- The provision of effective adoption support to all those affected by adoption, minimising the likelihood of adoption breakdowns.

The specific responsibilities of the Adoption Service that would transfer to the new service would include:

- All duties and responsibilities set out within the Adoption National Minimum Standards and all other relevant legislation;
- Successful recruitment, preparation and assessment of a diverse range of adopters able to meet the needs of the diverse communities of Peterborough and contribute to regional and national needs;
- Provision of evidence-based adoption support services to adopters and adopted children;
- Provision of adoption support services to birth relatives affected by adoption;
- Maintenance of post adoption contact arrangements including letterbox contact;
- Operation and management of the adoption panel.

There is a tradition in Peterborough that every effort to identify adopters for individual children is made. Because the cohort is small, this can result in large variations in key performance indicators and the adoption scorecard. This is accepted, provided that the accompanying narrative can evidence that such variations are the result of delivering a timely, child-led adoption service.

The provider will be required to maintain and develop existing relationships with adoption agencies within the region. This will include maintaining dialogue and discussion with key partners in the development of regional adoption arrangements.

#### 6.1.8. Summary of Adoption Services to be provided

The following section summarises the main services to be provided in relation to adoption services by the provider on behalf of Peterborough City Council through the Permanency Service. This section is not exhaustive but seeks to describe the key features of a high quality, outcomes focused and child-centred approach to the delivery of adoption services.

Services provided under this agreement will at least reach the standards set by the National Minimum Standards for Adoption, 2014, and any statutory guidance or legislative requirements that

come into force during the lifetime of the contract. Provision of this service places the child at the centre of all activities and recognises the life-long impact of adoption on the adopted child, their adoptive families and birth families.

**Recruitment and Assessment of Adopters:** The Permanency Service will use information about children subject to child in need and child protection plans and becoming looked after to help to inform recruitment activities. It will seek to recruit adopters able to meet the needs of harder to place children – those who are older, belong to sibling groups or who have additional needs – in order to help local children as well as to contribute to the matching of permanent families for children waiting for adoption regionally and nationally.

‘I became a Peterborough adopter because I was welcomed from the beginning... I did not feel judged and I was supported and accepted all the way through’

Comment from a Peterborough adopter

The Permanency Service will ensure that sufficient prospective adopters are recruited who are willing and able to offer fostering for adoption and concurrent placements where such arrangements are in the best interests of the child concerned.

Potential adopters will experience a non-judgemental and equal opportunity focused approach to assessment that values diversity and welcomes potential adopters from all ethnic, religious, language, racial and social backgrounds regardless of sexuality, marriage or civil partnership status and including single applicants.

Enquiries from potential adopters will be handled helpfully and promptly in accordance with the statutory guidance relating to the Two Stage Adopter Assessment Process. Enquiries will normally be responded to on the same day and detailed information packs sent to enquirers. Any enquiries from people living beyond the area within which the Permanency Service can provide a service will be referred to First4Adoption or similar so that their motivation as a prospective adopter is not lost.

The preparation process, obtaining the required statutory checks, arranging of the adoption medical and the assessment process will be carried out by the Permanency Service in accordance with the Adoption National Minimum Standards.

On completion of the two stage adoption process, the full range of information is considered by the Adoption Panel, which then makes a recommendation as to whether or not the applicants are approved as adopters and, if they are to be considered for concurrent planning or fostering for adoption placements, as temporary foster carers for a named child. Applicants are encouraged to attend the panel to give their views or provide in writing any views they want the panel to consider.

‘I cannot praise my adoption workers highly enough... it has been brilliant from start to finish... open, honest, realistic, all the way to the adoption order.... That must not change....’

Comment from a Peterborough adopter

The recommendation of the panel is considered by the Permanency Service Agency Decision Maker, who makes the final decision.

Should any concerns about the prospective adopters arise during any part of the process, these will be discussed with the applicants, and a second opinion interview will be arranged where appropriate.

Should issues arise during the Stage Two process that the assessing social worker or manager believe may mean that an applicant may not be approved by panel, a 'brief report' may be presented to the panel, setting out the concerns. Applicants may make representations in writing or in person to the panel in these circumstances.

Where the panel recommends that an assessment should not be completed, the Permanency Service Agency Decision Maker will make a 'qualifying determination' and inform the applicant of their options. Applicants are entitled to ask for the application to be reconsidered by the panel or to proceed to an Independent Review Mechanism. The recommendation of the subsequent adoption panel or of the Independent Review Mechanism is then referred back to the Permanency Service Agency Decision Maker who will consider all the information and reach a final decision.

**Family Finding and Matching Children with Adopters:** The Permanency Service will maintain close links with Children's Social Care services in Peterborough, ensuring that children for whom adoption is identified as being in their best interests can be matched quickly with available adopters.

The responsibility for family finding lies with the Permanency Service and the first priority for the Permanency Service is therefore to recruit adopters able to meet the assessed needs of children needing adoptive homes. However, the Permanency Service will also ensure that it provides adopters for other children awaiting adoption within the Eastern Region and nationally.

'The support from the Adoption Team is always brilliant.... We have worked together to find loving, brilliant adopters for a number of my children.... It's great to feel that you have made such a difference to a child's future....'

Social Worker in Children in Care Service

Adopters recruited by the Permanency Service on behalf of Peterborough City Council will be provided to the Council on suitable matching with children looked after by Peterborough without any application of an interagency or other fee.

Matches of children with adopters will take place in partnership between the child's social worker and the Permanency Service. Matches will be made on the basis of the child's holistic needs and will include consideration of age, siblings, any special needs as well as ethnicity and religion. However, placing a child will not be delayed on the basis of seeking to find an exact ethnic or religious match if a family is available who can meet the child's other needs. In such circumstances, the prospective adopters will need to demonstrate how they will promote the child's positive sense of identity.

The Permanency Service will promote contact with birth families, subject to an assessment of the best interests of the child. Adopters will be consulted on post adoption contact, but the ethos of the Service is based on an assumption that post adoption contact with birth families is usually beneficial for the child.

The Service will seek to match adopters to children at the earliest opportunity. While priority will first be given to matching adopters to Peterborough children, interagency placements of children

from other local authorities will be actively considered in order to support the national priority that no child should be left waiting when a suitable match is available elsewhere.

Adopters recruited by the Permanency Service who are matched with children looked after by other authorities will attract an inter-agency fee. This fee will be retained by the Permanency Service and will be used to support adoption arrangements, or contribute to the cost of interagency fees that are made when a Peterborough child is placed with adopters recruited by other agencies.

Peterborough children placed with adopters recruited by other local authorities or voluntary adoption agencies will be subject to payment of an interagency adoption fee. This fee will be payable by the Permanency Service. Decisions as to whether to approach external adoption agencies in order to identify a suitable match will not be delayed by the need to pay an interagency adoption fee. Where there is any disagreement as to whether to seek external adopters, the Council and provider will use the Practice Issues escalation process as set out in section 17.

In the event of any significant change of circumstances within the adopter's family situation or in the event that no placement has been made a year after approval, a relevant manager in the Permanency Service will review the position. This may result in a recommendation to panel to terminate the approval of the adopters. In such circumstances, the adopters will have the right to view any report provided to panel, to comment on the report and attend panel to provide their views if they so choose. As with the initial approval stage, the Permanency Service will make the Independent Review Mechanism available to adopters in these circumstances.

The final decision to match a child with identified prospective adopters will be made by the Agency Decision Maker for Peterborough City Council. This includes any Fostering For Adoption Placements, in line with regulations and any matches between adopters and children that have been presented to the Adoption Panel.

**Support to Placements:** the Permanency Service will provide a range of support services to adopters, which will be tailored according to individual needs. Support available will include:

- Study days and evening seminars on issues of relevance to adopters;
- Opportunities for adopters and adopted children to meet at informal social events and so develop informal sources of support;
- Provision of consultation and advice on behavioural problems and emotional difficulties;
- Consultation to adopters on talking to children about their history;
- Support and liaison/assistance with referrals to specialist services such as Community Mental Health Services and local educational support services;
- Support with arranging contact including provision of a letterbox system;
- Lending of relevant resources including books and DVDs;
- Provision of parenting support and training including support with parenting adolescents.

A detailed adoption support plan will be agreed between the child's social worker, the adopters and the Permanency Service, which will detail the support to be provided, including the provision of any financial support, to the adoptive placement.

The Permanency Service will ensure that the Adoption Support Plan is included within the child's electronic case record.

**Post Adoption Support:** The Permanency Service will provide a full and comprehensive service to support adoptive and birth family members.

Any adoptive family living in Peterborough may request support from the Permanency Service, including an assessment for financial support or support with education. The Service will assess the needs of all those requesting a support service and agree an individual support plan with them. In many cases, the support offered will be via an evidence based programme except where the individual needs of adopters and/or children and young people mean that a bespoke package of support is required.

Short-term specialist intervention may be offered according to the assessed individual need of the adoptive family and may include support with life-story work, mediation over contact issues, attachment and therapeutic support including therapeutic parenting work. The Permanency Service will provide support to adopters and adopted children and young people in accessing a range of other services as appropriate including, for example, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services.

The post adoption support service will help and support families to access parenting support groups including Secure Base programmes, and will offer a variety of support activities including stay and play groups and adoption support groups.

‘A good adoption service is responsible, innovative, creative, reflective, supportive, partnership focussed, curious, open, knowledgeable, friendly, understanding, has vision, is welcoming, ambitious, and experienced...’

Members of staff from the Peterborough adoption team

The Permanency Service will also ensure birth parent counselling for birth parents and other significant birth relatives is provided. A contract is currently in place with Adoptionplus for this service, and this contract has a further two years to run. this contract will be novated to the Permanency Service provider as part of this contract.

The Permanency Service will provide services to adopted adults and their birth relatives including counselling in preparation for search and reunion. Intermediary services between birth relatives and adopted people aged 18 and above, together with birth record counselling will be offered by the Permanency Service.

**Panels:** The Permanency Service will operate an Adoption panel in accordance with the relevant legislation and statutory guidance. Sufficient numbers of panels will be held in order to ensure that demand from the need to make recommendations around the approval of prospective adopters and to minimise delays in matching and placing children. At least one member of the Adoption Panel will be a social worker and another will be a senior officer from within Peterborough City Council’s Children’s Services.

Responsibility for the administration of the panel will lie with the Permanency Service.

**Agency Decision Maker:** The Agency Decision Maker role as this relates to prospective adopters will be delegated to the Permanency Service. However, Peterborough City Council will maintain the Agency Decision Maker role in respect of individual children and young people.

**Independent Review Mechanism:** Prospective adopters who are unhappy with the Agency’s decision have the right to access an Independent Review Mechanism; the Permanency Service will ensure that information about this right is made available.

**International Adoption:** Applicants who wish to adopt a child from overseas will either be offered a service directly by the Permanency Service, for which a charge will be made that meets the cost of the service provided, or will be referred on to a suitable independent adoption agency that is able to offer a similar service [and which will also apply a charge accordingly].

#### 6.1.9. Payment of Adoption Allowances & Arrangements for Financial Assessment

There will be occasions when adoption allowances are payable to adopters. The Permanency Service will be responsible for undertaking financial assessments and any reviews of adoption allowances as required.

The model of financial assessment used is the standardised model, which can be found at:

[http://kinshipcarers.co.uk/documents/Means\\_test\\_guidance.pdf](http://kinshipcarers.co.uk/documents/Means_test_guidance.pdf)

The Permanency Service will be responsible for ensuring that allowances are calculated accurately and are paid to adopters in a timely way. The Permanency Service will be responsible for reclaiming any overpayments made.

#### 6.1.10. Supporting Contact Arrangements

The Permanency Service will ensure that there are arrangements in place to facilitate indirect contact between children and birth families in line with the requirements of any court orders and best practice. This will include the operation of an efficient letter-box contact service.

There may be some occasions when similar arrangements for indirect contact are required where children and young people are in care or are subject to Child Arrangement or Special Guardianship Orders. The Permanency Service will also be responsible for ensuring the smooth operation of such contact arrangements.

## 7. Placement & Resource Finding Service

Placements for children and young people coming into care or for those in care for whom a change of placement is required are identified by a small team currently known as the Access to Resources Team [ART]. This team consists of three full time Access to Resources Officers and one Business Development Officer.

The Access to Resources Officers identify suitable placements in in-house, Independent Fostering Agency, semi-independent living and residential placements, while the Business Development Officer ensures that accurate records of moves are maintained in order to ensure that correct payments are made to carers and external providers by finance and to ensure that the correct contracts are in place with external providers. The Team also identifies low cost accommodation for young people aged 18 and over who have no recourse to public funds – mostly young people who arrived in the UK as unaccompanied asylum seeking children who were looked after by Peterborough City Council before reaching the age of 18.

While most of the activity of the team is related to placements, it also has responsibility for identifying experts [e.g. psychologists, psychiatrists and so on] where specialist assessments are needed as part of pre-proceedings under the Public Law Outline, and for identifying crisis support to maintain children and young people safely in their homes and so prevent unnecessary or unplanned admissions into care.

These members of staff and the functions they undertake will transfer to the Permanency Service under this agreement. However, while all budgets relating to children and young people in care and

for accommodation for 18+ year olds with no recourse to public funds will also transfer to the Permanency Service, those relating to crisis family support and specialist assessments will remain with the local authority. The Access to Resources Officers will be required to continue to identify crisis support and expert assessments as they do now. This is a small proportion of the work that they do, most of which is associated with placement finding.

Peterborough City Council has a procedure in place that sets out the level of authorisation required for a child to become looked after for the first time, for a placement move to take place, or for an external resource to be commissioned to support a family in crisis or undertake a specialist assessment. It is the responsibility of the Permanency Service to ensure that the correct authorisations are in place before placements or resources are identified.

‘This service is about children, individual and unique children, who need a home that is safe and stable, where they are loved and they can thrive... that’s all that matters really...’

Comment by a Member of staff

Except in urgent situations, the decision to look after a child or agree a change in placement are usually agreed through the Peterborough Access to Support Panel [PASP], which is held weekly except on

the last week of the month, when the Peterborough Joint Access to Support Panel [JASP] is held. The PASP is chaired by the Assistant Director for Children’s Social Care, while the JASP is chaired by the Service Director for Children and Safeguarding. The JASP considers resource requests where the complexity of the needs mean that joint funding between the local authority and the Clinical Commissioning Group and/or with dedicated school’s funding is likely to be indicated.

The Permanency Service will be required to be represented on these resource panels in order to assist in identifying suitable resources in advance as well as contributing to the discussion about the type of resource available that is most likely to meet assessed need.

Where the situation is urgent, the decision for a child or young person to become looked after for the first time is the responsibility of the Assistant Director for Children’s Social Care or, in their absence, the Service Director for Children and Safeguarding.

Where a child needs a placement – either because they are coming into the care system for the first time or because a current placement is coming to an end – the Council will ensure that all known and relevant information about the child is provided to the Permanency Service. This is in order to ensure that prospective carers are in the best possible position to meet the needs of children placed through knowledge of their routines and recent experiences, and that all carers are informed about any additional needs and/or risks that the child or young person may pose to other members of the fostering household.

The Permanency Service will do everything possible to match the needs of the child with an available placement as closely as possible, recognising that compromises are always likely to be needed. In respect of placements with ‘in-house’ foster carers, the Permanency Service will make all reasonable efforts to provide additional support to placements so that the placement has the best chance of being successful in meeting the needs of the child or young person.

A fundamental aim of the Permanency Service is to increase the proportion of children and young people placed with ‘in-house’ foster carers, reducing reliance on IFA carers and residential

placements. However, it will be the case that the Permanency Service will continue to need to source placements from these sectors – particularly as the service is becoming established.

The Permanency Service will negotiate with commissioned providers of placements through IFAs and residential placements on behalf of the Council. The contract will remain between the provider of the placement and Council, as opposed to between the Permanency Service and the commissioned provider of the placement. Contracts are standard national contracts, and are designed to apply between Council and commissioned provider.

Decisions about placements and placement matching must remain child-centred; in-house resources should not be used where it is clear that needs are unlikely to be met through this route. Some externally commissioned placements will always be required in order to meet the assessed needs of the child or young person.

The Permanency Service will consult with the child or young person’s social worker about the suitability of the placement being offered. In most cases it is expected that the matching process will be such that the child or young person’s social worker will agree that the placement being offered is suitable. Where this is not the case, and where the concerns of the social worker cannot be addressed through the provision of additional support to the placement offered by the Permanency Service and assessed as being a good match by the Service, the practice escalation policy in section 17 is to be followed.

‘You just want it to work... you want to take a child and for them to fit with you and your family... It rarely works that you can meet them before they arrive, it always seems to be a crisis... I always want to know what the child likes, what they enjoy, what makes them happy; we know they are going to have had problems and we need to know those too... but I want to know more than just those....’

Foster carers talking asked to say what they want to know about a child before placement

### 7.1. Initial Health Assessment for Children in Care

The Permanency Service will facilitate the arrangement of the initial health assessment for all children and young people when they first become looked after.

Under these arrangements, the Access to Resources Team ensures that the Looked After Children’s Health Team is notified when a child becomes looked after, and liaises with the child’s social worker to ensure that all necessary paperwork including consent to the medical is provided to the Looked After Health Team.

Initial Health Assessments should be completed within 20 working days of a child or young person first becoming looked after. Performance against this indicator will be monitored as part of the contract.

## 8. Family Group Conferencing Service

Family Group Conferences support extended families and friendship networks to develop sustainable family-based plans that address the safeguarding needs of children in the family. They are usually held where children and young people are already subject to child protection plans, and where there is a risk that without the development of a sustainable family plan, children and young people are likely to come into the care system.

Family Group Conferences are also often the forum within which relatives who may be able to provide permanent care for a child through a Special Guardianship or Child Arrangement Order are identified.

Operating the Family Group Conferencing Service independently from the Council will be helpful in supporting positive work and engagement with families who will also be engaged with the Council's statutory child protection services.

The current Family Group Conference Service in Peterborough consists of 1 full time conference coordinator and administrative support. There is also a budget to fund incidental expenses such as venue hire and light refreshments.

The Permanency Service will undertake all activities related to delivering successful family group conferences, including facilitating the involvement and engagement of the extended family and friendship network, making arrangements for the Conference including sourcing a suitable venue, providing the conference facilitator and providing necessary administrative support.

The Permanency Service will ensure that the agreed family plan is written up and circulated to all parties, including the child's social worker, within 5 working days of the Family Group Conference. The current arrangements and requirements of the Family Group Conference Service for the monitoring of outcomes and the review of the effectiveness of the provision will continue post transfer.

Where family plans are not able to promote the welfare of a child and serious safeguarding concerns remain, a Family Group Conference can also help families to identify and agree upon possible alternative permanent carers within the extended family or friendship group who could look after the child in the event that it is no longer in the best interests of the child to remain with their parents. Identification of alternative potential permanent carers within the extended family network should therefore always feature as part of the contingency plan agreed by the family in the event that it is not possible to develop a sustainable plan that enables the child or children to remain safely in the permanent care of their parents or carers.

By operating the Family Group Conferencing Service, the Permanency Service will have the benefit of forming relationships with family and extended family members. These may prove to be beneficial in the event that viability assessments and/or Special Guardianship or Child Arrangement Order assessments of extended family members are required at a later point.

The current Family Group Conferencing Service does not have sufficient capacity to meet need, and one of the areas where the Permanency Service will be asked to identify investment from savings elsewhere is to build capacity within the Family Group Conference Service.

## 9. Special Guardianship and Child Arrangement Orders

### 9.1. Assessment

Around 30 children and young people are placed from care with relatives through Special Guardianship Orders [in the majority of cases] or Child Arrangement Orders in Peterborough each year. Prior to such a placement being made, courts require an assessment of the suitability of the carers [who are often relatives of the child or children concerned].

There has been a trend towards younger children being placed through special guardianship orders. Although assessment requirements for adoption and Special Guardianship Orders differ, this trend towards placing younger children with carers through a Special Guardianship Order means that in

order to secure the best long term outcomes for the child concerned, assessments of carers for a Special Guardianship Order benefit from being informed by learning and best practice relating to adoption assessments.

Ordinarily, any viability assessments completed in relation to family members or close friends of the child or family will be completed by the child's social worker. The Permanency Service will however be available to provide advice to social workers undertaking such assessments, and this advice may be particularly relevant where family members have been involved in earlier Family Group Conferences. In some circumstances, Permanency Staff may be asked to do a one off joint visit with the child's social worker as part of the viability assessment, in order that the decision making in respect of the child can benefit from this prior knowledge.

Where a viability assessment is positive and the care plan or parallel plan is for the child to remain with the carer permanently, the Permanency Service will undertake a Special Guardianship or Child Arrangement Order assessment. In doing so, the Permanency Service will liaise closely with the child's social worker.

Assessments will draw on the expertise in relation to completion of assessments of potential adopters, and will focus on the possible challenges that Special Guardianship and Child Arrangement Order carers may face both in the immediate term and as the child grows older and in particular, consider the viability of the arrangement and any support needs that may be indicated once the child reaches adolescence. These areas of focus for the assessment are in line with likely amendments to the Special Guardianship Regulations 2005, expected in February or March 2016.

All assessments will be completed in accordance with the timescales as determined by the court or within 16 weeks of the commencement of the assessment, whichever is the shorter. This is particularly the case in relation to court directed assessments, where any delays in completion can result in a wasted costs order being made against the Council. Such delays also result in reputational damage, which must be avoided at all costs.

These assessments are currently undertaken by the Fostering and Adoption Service and it is not envisaged that there will be any transfer of qualified social worker resource to facilitate activities in this area.

All assessments will be completed by a qualified social worker in line with the relevant regulations.

## 9.2. Support to carers under Child Arrangement & Special Guardianship Orders

The Permanency Service will offer support to carers of children under Special Guardianship Orders and Child Arrangement Orders for all children who were previously looked after by the Council that is comparable to that available to adopters [and as set out in the paragraphs above]. This is another area for priority investment as savings are delivered as a result of the Permanency Service.

Where a Special Guardianship or Child Arrangement Order is made, an agreed support plan will be put in place detailing the financial and other forms of support to be offered and the duration of this support.

Financial support is ordinarily only available for a period of two years from the making of the Special Guardianship or Child Arrangement Order, and is subject to an assessment of means unless the child was formally placed with the carers as a child in care [in other words, where the carers were connected carers]. Financial support is generally only available where the child concerned was looked after by the Council immediately prior to the making of the Child Arrangement or Special Guardianship Order.

The Permanency Service is responsible for ensuring that financial assessments are completed as required and for notifying the carers of the level and duration of financial support. Except where children were placed with non-related general foster carers prior to the making of the Special Guardianship or Child Arrangement Order, allowances are equivalent to level 1 fostering allowances, less child benefit and holiday, birthday and celebration payments.

The Permanency Service is also responsible for reviewing on-going support to carers under Child Arrangement or Special Guardianship Orders in line with the relevant statutory guidance. This includes undertaking a re-assessment of financial means where this is required by the statutory guidance.

The budget for funding Special Guardianship and Child Arrangement Order Allowances will transfer to the Permanency Service and it will be the responsibility of the Permanency Service to ensure that payments are made to carers in a timely way.

The model of financial assessment used is the standardised model, which can be found at:

[http://kinshipcarers.co.uk/documents/Means\\_test\\_guidance.pdf](http://kinshipcarers.co.uk/documents/Means_test_guidance.pdf)

All carers under Special Guardianship and Child Arrangement Orders are able to approach the Permanency Service beyond the period of the duration of the original support plan and request additional support from the service.

The Permanency Service will offer a range of support to carers, based on their individual needs. Time limited support may be offered in relation to parenting, supporting the carers with attachment issues, managing adolescence, support with helping to explain the child's history and story to the child and in mediating contact disputes. The Permanency Service will also support carers to access other relevant support services such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health and education support services.

### 9.3. Promoting Special Guardianship & Child Arrangement Orders to Foster Carers

The Permanency Service will promote Special Guardianship and Child Arrangement Orders to non-related foster carers for children and young people in care to Peterborough City Council, as a way of securing permanency and a more 'normal' family life for the child or young person and family concerned, where this is in the best interests of the child or young person concerned.

As part of the promotion of such arrangements, the Permanency Service will offer detailed and bespoke on-going support plans for the carers concerned, giving them the confidence that they can come back to the service at any time should they need support in order to meet the needs of the child or young person.

'My foster carers are brilliant'

'They're protecting you'

'They're building your confidence'

'My carers really care for me...'

Young people asked what they like about foster care

Because the move from being a child in care and looked after by a non-related general foster carer is a very different scenario from that applying to relatives and former connected carers, exceptional financial support plans can also be agreed in these circumstances, providing they remain in line with the Special Guardianship Regulations, 2005 including as these are amended in February 2016.

The Permanency Service will be responsible for developing the support plan in partnership with the carers and in providing any practical assistance necessary to facilitate the application to the Court for the necessary order.

The Permanency Service will be responsible for ensuring that the support plan is included within the child's electronic case record and that a copy is provided to the carers. The Permanency Service will ensure that carers are aware of their obligations in respect of the arrangements.

The Permanency Service will be responsible for carrying out the reviews of the support plan as required by statutory guidance, and for ensuring that payments of allowances are made to carers in a timely way.

The cost of allowances and of non-financial elements of the support plan will be met by the Permanency Service.

#### 9.4. Legacy Arrangements

There are a reducing number of children and young people in Special Guardianship or Residence Order arrangements that were put in place prior to the Council taking the decision that financial support should ordinarily be available for a period of two years from the date of the Order being made.

Payments to carers under these arrangements continue until the child reaches the age of 16, or is no longer in the care of the carers for any reason. Allowances payable are subject to an annual financial assessment, which is the standardised model, which can be found at:

[http://kinshipcarers.co.uk/documents/Means\\_test\\_guidance.pdf](http://kinshipcarers.co.uk/documents/Means_test_guidance.pdf)

The budget for payment of allowances to this group of carers will transfer to the Permanency Service, and the service will be responsible for ensuring the timely payment of allowances.

The Permanency Service will also be responsible for carrying out the annual financial assessments, and for ensuring that the outcome of these assessments is loaded to the child's electronic case file and communicated to the carers in a timely fashion.

## 10. Statutory Social Work Functions for Children in Care & Care Leavers

Most statutory social work functions for children looked after and care leavers will continue to be provided by the Council. However, it is proposed that for the relatively small group of children who have been 'permanently' matched to long term 'in-house' foster carers, where such arrangements have been recommended by the child or young person's statutory review and agreed by the Council Agency Decision Maker, the social work functions in respect of these children will transfer to the Permanency Service.

This is intended to reduce bureaucracy often associated with decision making, and to support effective delegation of decision making to foster carers. The aim is to ensure that children and young people in care in such placements are able to experience a life that is as close as possible to that experienced by any child living in their permanent family home.

The Permanency Service will also be required to promote 'Staying Put' arrangements. Young people living with former foster carers under Staying Put are supported by personal advisers. This function

will also be provided by the new service for the group of children and young people who have been 'permanently' placed with in-house foster carers when they leave care.

Once such a placement has been recommended for permanent matching with an in-house foster carer the child or young person's statutory review, and this recommendation is agreed by the Council's Agency Decision Maker, the tasks and responsibilities of the child's social worker will be delegated to the Permanency Service.

Working within the regulations and statutory guidance, the Permanency Service will develop innovative approaches to ensuring that the children and young people living in 'permanent' foster families are able to experience a life that is as similar to that they would have were they not looked after. These approaches will need to combine ensuring that the household is effectively supported while providing carers with as much autonomy as possible to make decisions about the day-to-day lives of the children and young people for whom they care, in line with the Permanency Services' foster carer delegation protocol.

The Permanency Service will ensure separate workers are allocated to the child or young person in placement, and in the support role to the foster carers, in line with relevant legislation and statutory guidance.

Responsibility for the statutory social work function in respect of the child or young person will only transfer to the Permanency Service once the child or young person's case file is brought fully up to date.

'Having lots of different social workers'

'Having a social worker who always turns up late for meetings'

'Having to ask permission for everything... seeing friends, going on sleep overs...'

Young people asked what they do not like about being in care

The Permanency Service will ensure that all children and young people for whom they hold statutory responsibility under these provisions receive a service that meets and preferably exceeds the minimum statutory requirements and strives for excellence at all times.

Children and young people will be visited regularly and seen alone in placement; visits will be written up and care and other plans and any assessments will reflect the voice of the child. The allocated worker will work with partners including in health and education to ensure that the child or young person achieves their full potential.

Arrangements will be put in place to ensure that the child or young person accesses health assessments and dental checks at least in line with statutory requirements. Carers will participate in the completion of Strength and Difficulties Questionnaires in a timely way, subject to the age of the child or young person in placement.

Contact will be promoted with family and friends in accordance with the best interests of the child or young person.

Children and young people in care and placed in such 'permanent' in-house foster placements will continue to have access to advocacy services as commissioned by the Council, as well as to the Child in Care Council and statutory complaints processes. Any allegations made by children and young people in these placements will be notified to the Council within 72 hours, including any action undertaken to safeguard the child or young person, and the outcome of any subsequent enquiries.

The LADO will be notified where appropriate. Further information on managing allegations and ensuring that children and young people are safeguarded can be found in section 14.3 below.

It is not envisaged that this function will require a significant amount of transfer of resources. Children and young people for whom the Permanency Service will acquire statutory social work functions are the most settled in placement among the in care population as a whole. As such, they will require lower levels of visiting than most other children in care. There will be 2 social worker posts that will transfer to the Permanency Service to meet the needs of this group. There will be very few if any young people who will have left care from this group at the point of contract mobilisation, and so a 0.5 FTE personal adviser post will transfer to the Permanency Service to support leaving and after care functions.

Budgets associated with providing a service to this group of children and young people will also transfer to the Permanency Service. This will include budgets such as subsistence and travel costs for social workers, and incidental budgets related to the costs of supporting children and young people in care where these are not already met as part of the fees and allowances payable to foster carers.

In the event that a 'permanent' placement covered by these arrangements comes to an unplanned end, the child or young person will remain allocated to their existing worker for a period of up to 3 months to ensure that they are supported into their new placement. This period is to allow for a transfer of social work responsibility to the Council's child in care service, and to ensure that all relevant information is shared with any new placement.

### 10.1 Leaving and After Care Support for Care Leavers formerly 'permanently' placed with 'in house' foster carers

The majority of care leaving services will be provided by the Council. However, the Permanency Service will deliver Leaving and Aftercare Service in accordance with the relevant legislation and statutory guidance for all young people placed with 'in house' foster carers on a permanent basis and for whom responsibility has been delegated to the Permanency Service.

All such young people will have a pathway plan by the age of 15, assuming they are looked after at this point in their lives. Pathway plans will be informed by an up to date assessment. Young people will be involved in the development of their pathway plans, and the voice of the young person will be evident throughout the process, as well as recorded within the assessment and the plan.

Pathway plans will be regularly reviewed and a reassessment of need followed by a revised pathway plan will take place wherever there are significant changes in the circumstances of the young person, or in their plans for the future.

The Permanency Service will ensure that all care leavers who are or were formerly placed in 'permanent' foster placements have a Personal Adviser, and measures will be in place to ensure that the Permanency Service remains in contact with care leavers. The service offered to young people will be young-person centred. Care leavers will be involved in the development of plans for them and in developments surrounding Leaving and Aftercare generally.

The Permanency Service will work with local housing providers and in particular with the Council's Housing Services to ensure that all care leavers are provided with suitable housing. Moves to independent living will take place in a planned way except where urgent circumstances prevent this.

The Permanency Service will develop effective means of seeking the views of care leavers including through the development of safe and secure social media and web-based applications. This

approach may be delivered on behalf of the Council to include all care leavers by agreement and in due course.

The Permanency Service will ensure that care leavers have access to advice and support in relation to education, employment, training and apprenticeships.

The Permanency Service will broker support for care leavers from other services that they may need including Adult Social Care Services and Mental Health services.

The Permanency Service will assist care leavers to maintain their relationships with former care-givers and others of significance in their lives, while supporting them with relationships with their birth families as appropriate.

It is unlikely that there will be any need for more than 0.5 FTE personal adviser post to transfer to the Permanency Service in order to provide these leaving and after care services. However, it is recognised that this level of resourcing will need to be maintained under regular review as the Permanency Service develops. This may result in the transfer of additional resources from the Council to the provider at a later date.

In the event that the need for resources increases, arrangements to meet the increased need will be agreed within the Joint Governance Board.

## 11. Expected Service Developments

The provider will be required to present plans for the development of the following service improvements within 3 months of the end of the mobilisation period. Progress against the resulting implementation plans will be monitored through the Joint Governance Board.

### 11.1. Improving Support to Child Arrangement & Special Guardianship Order Carers

As noted elsewhere, the number of children leaving care to become permanently placed with Special Guardianship Order carers is currently around 30 per annum – similar to the number of children leaving care through adoption. Numbers placed under Child Arrangement Orders are currently very much smaller, but the principle of improving support to this group of carers applies equally.

The age of children being placed with relatives under a Special Guardianship Order during care proceedings is reducing, with a growing number of children aged 5 or under being placed through these provisions.

Carers providing permanent care to young children under either Child Arrangement or Special Guardianship Orders are likely to face similar challenges to those faced by adopters as children placed with them grow older. We are therefore determined to ensure that this group of permanent carers are able to access similar levels of support as that available to adopters, in order to ensure that as few of these arrangements come to an unplanned end in the future.

Financial support offered to this group of carers is not envisaged to change. Current policy is for Special Guardianship Order carers to be provided with two years financial assistance in line with level 1 fostering allowances, less child benefit, except in exceptional circumstances [such as where the child concerned has complex disabilities]. This financial support to Special Guardianship Order carers is not envisaged to change.

However, the Permanency Service is required to develop a range of support services for permanent carers under Child Arrangement and Special Guardianship Orders that is broadly in line with that available to adopters, as described in sections 6.1.7 and 6.1.8 above. Where children are moving

from the care of the local authority to carers under these orders, particular attention is to be paid to ensuring that the initial support plan that is put in place will promote successful permanency.

### 11.2. Encouraging Foster Carers to Seek Special Guardianship Orders

For children who are placed with non-relative foster carers – both ‘in-house’ and IFA carers – the new service will promote permanency through Special Guardianship Orders. Our foster carers say that the principal issue that concerns them about Special Guardianship Orders is access to support for the child and themselves in future years, should this be necessary.

Some carers are also concerned about financial implications, and there is greater provision within our current arrangements for an on-going commitment to pay a Special Guardianship Order allowance in these circumstances. However, it is the issue of access to non-financial support that is the most commonly mentioned barrier, and it is in this area that the new service will be expected to make a significant contribution.

### 11.3. Improving Support for Children Returning Home from Care

The most common reason for children and young people to leave care is returning home to parents after a period of being looked after. Nationally, around 34% of exits from care happen for this reason. Sadly, nationally, around half of these children and young people return to the care system.

We want to improve outcomes for this group of children and young people. The Permanency Service will therefore develop new and innovative approaches to supporting the effective return home, so that such moves result in successful permanency.

Such approaches may not require any significant investment; they may be possible to achieve by utilising existing resources in different ways. Foster carers may be able to be supported to play a bigger role in supporting parents in developing their parenting abilities through modelling, for example.

This approach will generally be available to two groups of children and young people: those for whom the plan on coming into care is to identify and support a sustainable return home and those where an assessment has been completed that indicates that a return home is appropriate, but where some additional support is likely to be necessary in order for this to be successful.

The outcomes of the new approaches to supporting this group of children and young people to return home will form part of the overall performance framework relating to the Permanency Service.

### 11.4. Developing capacity within the Family Group Conferencing Service

The current level of resources within the Family Group Conferencing Service is limited and is not sufficient to meet demand. This is also an area where the new service will be expected to use savings derived from reduced levels of higher cost placements to increase investment. The eventual aim will be to increase capacity of this service by 100%, or as necessary to meet reasonable levels of demand.

## 12. Service User Engagement

The Permanency Service will ensure that the voice of service users influences the design of services. In particular, children and young people who are in care and young people who have left care will be provided with a variety of opportunities to participate in the design and review of services as well as in their own individual care and pathway plans.

The Permanency Service will assist in supporting the Children in Care Council and a Care Leaver's participation group. Children and young people of primary school age and above will be encouraged to participate in these representative groups by foster carers and staff within the Permanency Service.

In addition, foster carers and key members of staff will be proactive in ensuring and enabling all children and young people to participate in the development of plans that determine their future, and the review of these plans, in partnership with Independent Reviewing Officers.

The Permanency Service will work with children and young people in care and care leavers as well as with the Council to enable and develop safe and secure means of communicating their views about the services they receive through social media and web-based applications.

The Permanency Service will work with young people as they are preparing to leave care and with those who have left care to help to develop a range of resources that assist young people in managing independent living, including, for example, various practical 'how to' guides on managing the responsibility of a property.

The Permanency Service will ensure that there are a number and variety of ways in which children and young people in care and care leavers are able to meet informally.

The successes of children in care and care leavers will be regularly celebrated, including at events that are specifically designed to build pride, resilience and aspiration among children and young people in care and care leavers.

The Permanency Service will ensure that children and young people in care and care leavers are able to meet with elected Members and senior officers of the authority in formal and informal circumstances.

Foster carers and prospective adopters will be provided with a number of ways of participating in the design and review of services.

The Permanency Service will promote and support a Foster Carers' support group and/or executive committee or similar. Senior officers of the Permanency Service will meet regularly with this group, and will work through any issues of concern for carers with their representatives. The commissioning lead for the Council will also meet regularly with carers through this mechanism.

Foster carers and adopters will be supported to develop their own informal and formal means of support, building capacity across the service. New carers, for example, may be 'buddied' with more experienced carers, who can provide support and advice as they develop their confidence and experience.

Adopters and adopted children will be given the opportunity to meet other adopters and children and thereby develop their own sustainable support networks. Examples of how this can be achieved include 'Stay and Play' sessions, as well as more formal support events, perhaps based around common themes such as helping children to understand their journey.

Parents of children and young people looked after will also be given the opportunity to participate in the design of services, as well as being encouraged and enabled to participate in the planning in respect of their own child, where this is in the child's best interests. Contact will be promoted – where this is in the best interests of the child or young person – and parents' views will be valued and respected.

Birth families of adopted children will also be enabled to participate in the design of services to support birth families and, together with parents and extended families of children and young people in care, will be asked to provide their views about the effectiveness of the services that they receive.

The above activities will support the functioning of the Corporate Parenting Panel, by helping Members to maintain an understanding of the experience of being in care and leaving care and so be more effective advocates for looked after children and young people.

## 13. Information and Communication Technology

The Permanency Service will continue to use the Peterborough City Council child recording system – Liquid Logic – for recording all child and carer related matters. Information sharing agreements will be in place to facilitate this arrangement, and the provider will be required to have policies and procedures in relation to data protection and data sharing that are fit for purpose and at least meet the minimum statutory requirements.

Licences for use of Liquid Logic will be provided by the Council and will not be subject to any charge to the provider.

The Permanency Service will be expected to develop ICT solutions to facilitate the recording of observations by foster carers of children and young people in placement, enabling an electronic record of the progress of children and young people to be maintained.

The Council will ensure that staff working for the Permanency Service have access to ICT equipment and support in line with social workers and officers working in Children’s Social Care.

## 14. General Practice Standards

### 14.1 Record Keeping

#### 14.1.1. Statutory Practitioner Records

The Permanency Service will ensure that all practitioners working with children, young people, foster and adoptive carers maintain accurate records using the Liquid Logic client recording system [or such other systems that may be adopted by agreement with the Council over the course of the contract].

This recording must be in accordance with best practice standards, including:

- Clearly evidencing the views, wishes and feelings and voice of service users;
- Distinguishing between opinion and fact;
- Taking in to account factors such as ethnicity, gender, religion, sexuality, age and ability, any disabilities in the assessment of need and care planning;
- Evidencing effective management oversight including recording of decisions and reasons for decisions being made;
- Evidencing the involvement of children and young people in care and pathway plans made about them;
- Being completed within 72 hours of the event [visit etc.] taking place;
- Using the correct templates for recoding of information including in the development of chronologies, plans, completion of risk assessments and so on;
- Accepting updates that are applied within Liquid Logic to templates and processes so that practice within the permanency Service is aligned with that within Children’s Social Care.

The case file must include all relevant information including copies of relevant correspondence, financial and other assessments, any complaints or compliments and the outcome of any complaints.

#### 14.1.2. Record Keeping by Carers

The Permanency Service will ensure that all foster carers [including those who are looking after a child under the Fostering for Adoption or Concurrent Planning arrangements] keep clear, written records about the child or young person in placement, their activities, progress, appointments and any incidents or concerns.

Use of electronic recording systems is the expected model of recording factual daily observational recording about children, young people, other family members or those with a significant relationship with the child or young person who have been in contact with the child or foster placement.

Foster carers will also keep up to date photographs of the child or young person and maintain mementos and photos that can support the memories of children and young people in later life, in the form of a 'Life Story' book; again the expectation is that this will form part of a secure digital record.

Foster carers will be supported by the Permanency Service to contribute towards producing well-evidenced and appropriate reports for a range of purposes, including for the potential use in court.

Where a placement is offered to a child and their parent[s], the foster carer will ensure that recording of factual observations is detailed so that it can assist in decision making about the care arrangements that are likely to be in the best interests of the child. This information may need to be presented to court, and on rare occasions, carers may need to attend court. The Permanency Service will ensure that foster carers are trained in this area and are supported to share the information with the parent[s].

It is likely that on some occasions, the behaviour of children or young people in placement may be such that intervention by carers or others is required in order to maintain good order and discipline.

In addition to meeting all Foster Carer National Minimum Standards and in particular to Standard 3:

Promoting Positive Behaviour and Relationships, the Permanency Service will ensure that foster carers have clear written guidance around how to maintain good order and discipline.

These guidelines will state that as far as possible, only verbal guidance and instruction will be used to influence the behaviour of a child or young person.

Any other measures to influence a service users' behaviour will be wholly exceptional, restricted to minimum intervention and proportionate and appropriate in all circumstances. Any sanctions applied will be used sparingly and be contemporaneous, relevant and just.

In the event that any sanctions are used, the foster carer will record these clearly in the notes they maintain about the child or young person.

'I need help to change my behaviour since that will cause arguments if I get rude to older people'

Young person in care asked what they want to change

Any cases where any form of physical intervention is used will be notified in writing to the Council on the first working day after the event, meaning the social worker and team manager responsible for the child, or the lead commissioner in the case of children and young people 'permanently' matched with 'in-house carers'.

The expectation is that all foster carers are provided with an evidenced based training package that covers issues such as disorganised attachment, managing challenging behaviour, recovery from trauma and similar, with the outcome that there will be a reduced need to use sanctions or any form of physical intervention. Where such interventions have been needed, the Permanency Service will ensure that foster carers are provided with appropriate support with the aim of making it less likely that such responses will be required again.

The above applies to children and young people placed with prospective adopters but who have not yet been formally adopted. Once the child has been adopted, record keeping should be in accordance with that in normal family life – i.e. restricted to keeping mementoes and photos of activities for later life.

## 14.2. Safeguarding

Promoting the safeguarding and wellbeing of children and young people using the Permanency Service is of fundamental importance.

All foster carers and prospective adopters must receive in-depth training on safeguarding issues including:

- The provision of appropriate care with clear boundaries;
- Promoting safe use of social media, internet and similar by children and young people in placement;
- How to respond to a child or young person who makes a disclosure of abuse;
- Procedures to follow in the event that a child or young person goes missing from the placement;
- Recognition of signs that may indicate a young person being at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation and procedures to follow;
- Recognition of signs that a young person may be misusing non-prescription substances or alcohol, and the procedures to follow;
- Recognition of risks associated with self-harming behaviour.

All staff working in the Permanency Service who have contact with children, their families, or their carers, or who supervise those who have such contact, will receive safeguarding training appropriate to their role. This training will include access to the Local Safeguarding Children Board training and levels of training will be at least in line with minimum standards.

A senior manager within the Permanency Service will be named as being the lead for safeguarding issues. This officer will have responsibility for ensuring that the Permanency Service complies with the requirements of s.11 of the Children Act 2004.

The Permanency Service will have in place its own safeguarding procedure that complies with the Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board procedures and with Working Together 2015, and any subsequent procedures and statutory guidance that come into effect during the period of the contract. These procedures will be kept under regular review to ensure that they remain in line with best practice.

The Permanency Service will have a Whistleblowing procedure in place, and all staff and carers will receive training on the main features of the policy.

Where allegations have been made against staff or carers, the Permanency Service will inform the Local Authority Designated Officer [LADO].

Allegations made against foster carers will be managed in accordance with the requirements of the relevant National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services.

Decisions as to whether children and young people need to be moved from a placement following an allegation will be made jointly by the Permanency Service and the Council, with due regard to the views of the LADO. Placement moves will be avoided where this is unlikely to be in the best interests of the child or young person concerned. Factors to be considered when deciding whether or not a placement move should take place will include:

- The nature of the allegation and the identity of the person who has made it;
- The age and circumstances of the child or young person, with due regard to their wishes and feelings;
- Consideration of what actions can be taken to reduce or minimise any risks while enquiries are made.

The final decision as to whether a child or young person needs to move placement following an allegation having been made rests with the applicable Head of Service within the local authority, taking into account the advice provided by the LADO. Where the Permanency Service is unhappy with this decision and other means of resolving the disagreement have failed, the matter can be escalated using the practice escalation process.

Where the decision relates to a child or young person for whom looked after services have been delegated to the Permanency Service, the Permanency Service will consult with the LADO and IRO for the child or young person concerned. The Permanency Service will then seek ratification of their decision with the Commissioning Lead within Peterborough City Council, having supplied all relevant information about the concerns or allegations.

The Permanency Service will record and report to the Authority the volume of child protection incidents in relation to the Service as well as those referred by the Provider [including themes identified and action taken]. These detailed records of allegations will be compiled into an annual report to the Council which summarise:

- The nature of the allegations;
- Whether allegations have been made about the same carer or member of staff on more than one occasion;
- The action taken as a result of the allegation;
- The outcome of any enquiries or investigations;
- The final outcome – i.e. further training, disciplinary action, termination of approval, prosecution as relevant.

All child protection referrals received by the Authority about the Permanency Service, its employees and/or the Service will be logged and investigated under the Authority's Child Protection Procedure.

To assist the investigation, the Permanency Service will provide the Authority with all required information within the requested timescales.

The Permanency Service will ensure that carers and members of staff attend and contribute to all strategy and other meetings related to the safeguarding of individual children and young people as required.

### 14.3. Children and Young People Missing from Care

The Permanency Service will have in place a Missing from Care procedure, which will be in line with the procedures of the local safeguarding children board and the Council.

The Permanency Service will ensure that all employees and in particular, foster carers, are made aware of, understand and receive the appropriate training in relation to absconding and missing children and young people and the Permanency Service's procedure.

The Permanency Service will ensure that all absences are notified to the Authority in line with the Fostering Services [England] Regulations, 2011, and any regulations that come into effect during the course of the contract.

Where a child or young person for whom the Permanency Service has responsibility for the provision of a statutory social work service goes missing, the Permanency Service will ensure that appropriate risk assessments, including the Child Sexual Exploitation risk assessment where relevant, are undertaken and that these are used to update the care plan in order to ensure that risks to the child or young person are minimised.

The Permanency Service will co-operate fully with the need for Return Interviews to be completed with any missing young person. These are provided by a Council-commissioned organisation and will not incur any additional cost for the Service.

The Permanency Service will ensure that carers and practitioners attend and contribute to all strategy and other meetings relating to children and young people who go missing as required.

## 15. Finance, budgets and reporting arrangements

It is proposed that all placement related budgets will transfer to the Permanency Service. These budgets will then have savings targets attached to them, which will be delivered through increased use of Special Guardianship Orders and reduced

use of IFA and residential placements. In addition to delivering savings targets, investment required for new areas of service delivery [as detailed in the relevant sections below] will also be identified through the reduced use of more costly placements.

Staffing budgets for those who transfer to the new service under TUPE will also transfer, along with associated budgets covering staff expenses and similar. Details of posts can be found within the relevant schedule of the contract.

Sufficient budget will also transfer to ensure that incidental staffing expenses such as mileage and expenses are able to be met by the Permanency Service.

Business support functions are currently provided by SERCO to the Council under a long term contract. Resources sufficient to provide business support functions for the Permanency Service will transfer to the new service.

'The Permanency Service has to be value driven, not just cost driven'

Comment by member of staff

The table below sets out the expected year end position for placement budgets as at the end of month 10:

PLACEMENT TYPE	BUDGET
16+ ACCOMODATION / SUBSISTANCE	£839,829
INDEPENDENT AGENCY FOSTERING	£4,014,998
AGENCY RESIDENTIAL [SOCIAL CARE COST]	£2,095,852
IN HOUSE FOSTERING	£2,274,698
FAMILY AND FRIENDS – CONNECTED CARERS	£239,289
ADOPTION ALLOWANCE	£720,353
WELFARE SECURE – SOCIAL CARE COST	£122,905
ASYLUM SEEKERS	£477,656
REMAND	£12,314
REMAND CONTRIBUTION	-£66,340
NO RECOURSE TO PUBLIC FUNDS	£25,025
CLAIM FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS	-£477,656
<b>TOTAL LAC PLACEMENT BUDGETS</b>	<b>£10,278,923</b>
<b>NON LAC GENERAL FUND PLACEMENTS</b>	
18+ ACCOMMODATION SUBSISTENCE	£13,583
LAC EDUCATION	£60,000
STAYING PUT	£159,338
RESIDENCE ORDER	£226,095
SPECIAL GUARDIANSHIP ORDER	£727,372
<b>TOTAL NON LAC PLACEMENT PRESSURES</b>	<b>£1,186,388</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£11,473,311</b>

The total placement budget allowed for in 2016/17 is £11,666,309, meaning that assuming no sustained increase in numbers of children in the system, there should be sufficient budget to meet placement costs.

There is a £10,000 pa contribution to Axiom Housing within the 16+ budget above which provides some additional support to enable some higher need young people who are looked after to access provision at the Foyer.

The Dedicated Schools Grant [DSG] funds the educational element only of residential placements including welfare secure and remand placements for young people of statutory school age and for

any young person up to age 18 who has an Education, Health and Care Plan that identifies that a specialist education provision is needed to meet educational need.

The current pricing split for joint funded residential placements where the funding is split between children's social care and education is 28%/72%. A small number of specialist placements are also joint funded with the Clinical Commissioning Group, where there are clear health-related reasons for the placement being required. The contribution by the Clinical Commissioning Group is agreed at the monthly Peterborough Joint Agency Support Panel [JASP], at which the Permanency Service will be required to attend.

It is not possible for either of these funding sources to transfer to the Permanency Service. The Permanency Service will therefore be required to ensure that it has measures in place to ensure that the correct sums are received from the Council and Clinical Commissioning Group. The Permanency Service will also be responsible for providing information about children and young people where such joint funding arrangements are in place as requested, and to facilitate the provision of reports from commissioned providers when placements are reviewed within the Council's panel processes and in particular when reviewed by JASP.

The above funding split reduces the risk to the provider associated with high cost, low volume placements such as welfare secure since in most cases, the budget transferred to the provider will only be required to cover 28% of the placement cost, with the remainder being met from the DSG. Where there is a contribution from the Clinical Commissioning Group, the proportion of the total cost borne by the provider may be reduced further.

The operational elements of the Permanency Service will continue to be delivered from the current office locations. For most services, this means Bayard Place, Broadway, Peterborough. The Family Group Conference Coordinator is currently located within the Town Hall, Bridge Street, Peterborough. There is flexibility as to where this post may most appropriately be located. It is recognised that some elements of strategic operation of the service may be located elsewhere but the expectation is that all operational and line management functions remain at Bayard Place in order to ensure good communication with the services that continue to be delivered by the Council.

There will be no charge made to the provider for the use of the Council's accommodation at least in the foreseeable future. The provider will be required to enter into a license agreement as set out in schedule 17 of the terms and conditions.

Services and facilities including desk space, stationery, IT equipment, printing and so on will continue to be provided by the Council. This is so as to enable the Permanency Service to continue to benefit from existing large scale contracts with existing providers.

### 15.1. Savings to be achieved

The Council requires savings to be applied to the overall cost of providing the service as follows:

- 2016/17: Nil – contract mobilisation period. However, the provider will need to be preparing to achieve savings for 2017/18;
- 2017/18: £650,000;
- 2018/19 – a further £250,000 saving to be applied, meaning that there will be a total budget reduction of £900,000 by 2018/19

Thereafter, the service is expected to be provided at the same cost as for the year 2018/19, save for agreements relating to cost increases as set out below. In the event that further savings are realised after this financial year, these will be apportioned as set out in Section 15.2 on Transparency below.

These savings will be achieved by a steady reduction in the use of IFA placements [there were around 95 children and young people in such placements as of the end of February 2016] or by reduced use of higher cost residential placements. The Permanency Service will also be able to reduce costs by encouraging long term foster carers to feel sufficiently confident to apply for Special Guardianship Orders where this is in the best interests of the child or young person.

The Council also requires that the Permanency Service delivers investment in the following areas:

- Improved support to carers of children who have left care as a result of a Child Arrangement or Special Guardianship Order so that this is equivalent to the support offered to adopters;
- Increased capacity within the Family Group Conference Service so that it is able to meet demand in respect of children and young people subject to child protection plans;
- Investment in improving support for children returning home from care, including through development of innovative approaches to utilise the skills of foster carers to offer modelling and parenting support to families.

More information about these expectations are set out in the relevant sections elsewhere in this specification.

## 15.2. Transparency

Developing the Permanency Service will result in the transfer of a significant amount of public funding to the new provider. The aim of doing so is to re-energise services in the City with the end result that fewer children and young people are placed with for profit fostering agencies. While this approach is not just about reducing expenditure - we also want more of our children and young people placed with our carers whom we know well and hence we can be more confident about the matching of needs of children to fostering households – it would not be acceptable to the local community or to the political leadership of the Council for any of the public funds being transferred to be used to contribute to private sector profit.

For this reason, the provider of the Permanency Service will be required to operate under a rule of full financial disclosure and open-book accounting. The provider is required to adhere to the following requirements:

- Full accounting including the predicted budget position to be provided to the Council on a monthly basis: This is also essential as it will enable any developing financial shortfalls to be identified early and enable both partners to agree on corrective actions;
- All costs associated with the delivery of central support functions such as Human Resources support, staff training, management costs and similar are to be fully and openly detailed within the monthly reported budgets. The Council reserves the right to cap any such charges where they appear to be applied at a higher level than can be evidenced as reasonable by the provider;
- Where the provider is part of a broader organisation that includes ‘for profit’ activities and operations, the provider is not permitted to sub-contract any activities to ‘for-profit’ operations operated by the same provider except where the provider can evidence that these services are being provided on a cost only basis;

- Any surpluses that are created as a result of the activities of the Permanency Service shall not be used towards the payment of any salaries or bonuses. The Joint Governance Board will agree on how any surpluses are to be used. In most cases, surpluses will be required to contribute to savings that the Council will continue to need to identify, be used to invest in service development within the Permanency Service to support children and young people in Peterborough or in broader children's services within Peterborough, or to develop a contingency fund to assist the service in meeting increased costs in future financial years, as permitted by financial regulations. The likelihood is that any surplus will be used to contribute to all areas.

The provider will be required to make full accounts available to Council Finance Services and to auditors as required. These accounts will need to show where any funds have moved from one part of the provider organisation to another, and how these funds have been used.

### 15.3. Managing Cost Pressures

The initial budgets and staffing transferring to the Permanency Service from the Council reflect the 'as is' cost of providing a mixed range of placements for children and young people in care, providing adoption, residence order/child arrangement order and special guardianship order allowances, assessing the financial means of carers for allowances, providing adoption support services, recruiting, assessing and supporting foster carers and adopters, and funding young people aged 18 and over who have no recourse to public funds.

The placement budgets together have been sufficient to provide the mix of placements for around 345-355 children and young people in care; the level at which placement numbers have been for the last 12 months.

Cost pressures are most likely to arise from three main sources: increasing fees and costs associated with looking after children and young people because of cost pressures such as salary costs, average unit placement costs, the impact of changes in legislation or guidance, and so on, an increase in the numbers of children in care in Peterborough, or as a result of an unexpected increase in the number of low volume high cost placements.

Where such pressures arise, the Permanency Service and the Council will work together to identify ways in which pressures can be met without the need for additional Council funds being identified. It is not in the interests of the Council, the provider, members of staff or children and young people for cost pressures to become unsustainable, and additional funds will need to be identified where this is unavoidable.

#### 15.3.1. Managing general cost pressures

The assumption in place where there are any areas of increased costs is that the provider will first seek to offset such costs by applying savings elsewhere.

The principles of open book accounting that are required of the provider mean that the Permanency Service is able to demonstrate how increases in costs have been offset elsewhere, and where such actions have reached their limit.

Where the Permanency Service is unable to take further action to offset increased costs, the provider will provide a report to the Joint Governance Board, which will consider the level of shortfalls and the collective response to addressing this.

It will be important for sufficient notice to be provided of any financial risks, as the Council will need time to identify the source of any increased funding should this be required. This means that the Permanency Service must provide at least 3 months' notice of any intention to request additional Council funds to meet general cost pressures.

### 15.3.2. Increased costs arising from an increase in numbers of children & young people in care

The Permanency Service cannot directly influence the numbers of children and young people who are taken into care by the Council. However decisions about children and young people coming into the care system are only one factor contributing to overall numbers in care. Some research indicates that it is the throughput of children and young people through the care system and out to hopefully successful permanent care through return home, adoption, Special Guardianship Orders and so on that has more impact on the overall numbers of children looked after at any one time. These are all areas where the new Permanency Service will have impact.

Indeed, it is by improving services in such areas that the Council hopes not only to secure improved outcomes for more children and young people, but to help to continue to offset any long term trends towards an increasing number of children and young people coming into the care system as national figures have indicated over recent years.

However, it is recognised that it is increasing numbers of children and young people becoming looked after that present the most significant risk in relation to budget pressures.

The overall number of children and young people in care is not static, and fluctuates across the year. The expectation is that the Permanency Service will be able to manage pressures arising from short-lived peaks in numbers of children and young people in care that are higher than the 345-355 number, providing that these are offset by comparable periods when numbers are lower.

It is also the expectation that the increasing recruitment of fostering households in Peterborough, particularly households able to meet the needs of children and young people with more complex needs, will provide a cushion against which the costs associated with any more general increase in overall numbers of children and young people in care can be offset.

However, should there be any sustained period of high numbers, and particularly should these numbers increase above 365 children and young people in care for more than 2 months, it is recognised that the Permanency Service may not be able to meet the resulting increasing placement costs from savings made elsewhere.

Overall numbers of children and young people in care is monitored on a weekly basis by the Council and will continue to be so. This monitoring provides an early warning of any upward trend in overall numbers.

As in respect of the management of general cost pressures in the section above, the principles of open book accounting that will be required of the provider will mean that the Permanency Service will be able to demonstrate how increases in costs have been offset elsewhere, and where such actions have reached their limit.

It will be important for sufficient notice to be provided of any financial risks as the Council will need time to identify the source of any increased funding should this be required. The Permanency Service will therefore need to provide a detailed report outlining the impact of any increased numbers of children and young people in care once numbers have been at 365 or above for one

month, should this increase be sustained for two months and longer. This report will need to identify what actions can be taken to offset costs elsewhere.

Overall numbers and the impact on placement costs will then be monitored closely by a group of senior officers from the provider and the Council as agreed by the Joint Governance Board. This group will work to ensure that factors such as thresholds for access to the care system and the progress of children through the system remain appropriate, taking action where necessary.

The impact of such remedial actions will be monitored by the Governance Board, which will meet more frequently if this is agreed as appropriate.

Where overall numbers of children and young people in care in Peterborough continue to result in sustained pressures on the budget of the Permanency Service, the Governance Board will support approaches to the Council in identifying additional funds, recognising that this may lead to service reductions elsewhere.

### 15.3.3. Unexpected increased use of 'Low volume, High cost' placements

Overall numbers of children and young people in Peterborough in the care system are relatively small, meaning that there is a vulnerability to volatility in relation to the numbers of children and young people requiring high cost placements that are generally needed by only a very small number over the course of the year. An example is the cost of remands to secure accommodation within the criminal justice system.

Although criminal remands are rare in Peterborough, there have been occasions where a number of young people have been remanded into custody for considerable periods, often because they have been accused of involvement in serious offences as a group.

For young people of statutory school age, the risk of an exceptional increase in high cost placements is offset by the proportion of the overall cost that is chargeable to the Dedicated Schools Grant [DSG]. This is an important safeguard in that it is this age group who are more likely to be remanded to a secure training centre, where costs are significantly higher than young offender institution [YOI].

For older young people, it is not possible to use the DSG to offset costs unless they have an Education Health and Care Plan that stipulates a requirement for on-going specialist education post 16 – which is unlikely. For older young people, the full cost of such remands will need to be met from the placement budget, although in most cases, the cost will be reduced as it is more likely that young people will be remanded to a YOI unless they have been assessed as having particular vulnerabilities.

In all cases where young people are remanded into custody, the Youth Offending Service will assess risks of re-offending, witness intimidation and failure to surrender to bail and seek to identify alternatives to custody that enable young people to be supported within their families or in non-custodial care placements, which might include a foster placement outside of the immediate area. The Permanency Service will respond positively to any request to identify a placement that is an alternative to custody and make every effort to identify a suitable alternative.

The Permanency Service can work to reduce risks of high cost placements being required as a result of criminal remands through the recruitment of foster carers able and willing to offer appropriate placements to young people involved in offending behaviour, providing such placements with the necessary support and training.

The placement budgets transferred to the Permanency Service includes the grant payable from Central Government that is intended to contribute towards the cost of criminal remands. This grant

has proved to be more than sufficient to meet costs in the current financial year as there have been only very limited remands into custody for short durations.

The other principal area of risk in relation to high cost and low volume placements is in respect of the use of welfare secure. The budget transferred to the Permanency Service assumes that one young person of statutory school age will occupy a secure placement at any one time throughout the year. The DSG makes a significant contribution to the cost of secure placements for young people of this age, again off-setting the risk associated with a higher than expected occupancy of this type of accommodation.

However, there are risks in the event that an older young person requires welfare secure accommodation, and risks should a higher number of young people require such accommodation at any one time. In recent years, use of welfare secure has mostly been in relation to protecting young people from risk of Child Sexual Exploitation, risks that remain present in Peterborough as elsewhere.

Welfare secure will always be used as a last resort; and alternative placements identified wherever possible. The Permanency Service will help to reduce risks of the use of welfare secure accommodation by recruiting, training and supporting carers to offer fostering placements to young people at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation. These activities will also help offset risks of continuing high-cost specialist placements that are otherwise often required as step-down placements from welfare secure.

Where there is an increased use of high cost placements, the expectation will be that the Permanency Service takes all possible steps to identify savings elsewhere that can offset the increased costs involved.

As in respect of the management of other cost pressures discussed in the sections above, the principal of open-book accounting will mean that the provider is able to demonstrate the measures taken to offset cost pressures. Where such pressures cannot be contained within the overall budget of the Permanency Service, the provider will submit a detailed report to the Joint Governance Board outlining the nature and extent of the pressures and the actions taken to mitigate these.

The Joint Governance Board will agree a joint plan to address the pressures, which may include an approach being made to the Council to request additional resources. Such a request may lead to the need to reduce services elsewhere.

#### 15.3.4. General actions to prepare for and avoid in-year cost pressures

The Joint Governance Board will work to ensure that there is a planned response to cost pressures as far as this is practicable. This will include:

- Monitoring of changing patterns of demand, including in relation to placement type;
- Targeted recruitment of fostering households to help to meet changing patterns of demand;
- In so far as financial regulations allow, using any surpluses from one financial year to develop a contingency that can be used in the event of an increase in, for example, high cost low volume placements in a subsequent financial year
- Use of contract variations to meet longer term changes in funding requirements, including as a result of increased costs arising from salaries, general inflation and similar issues.

### 15.3.5. Accounting and reporting arrangements

The Permanency Service will be required to complete all financial and accounting reporting including the provision of returns to various Government Departments in order to claim grants towards the costs of operating the services for which it is responsible. Examples of grants to be claimed in this way include those relating to the contribution towards the placement costs of unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people.

Full financial accounts will also be required to be submitted to the Council on an annual basis or as requested through the Joint Governance Board. These accounts will identify in detail how Council funds have been spent for the year or period in question.

As noted elsewhere, the provider will also be responsible for managing:

- The payment of fees and allowances to 'in-house' foster carers including the provision of annual statements detailing fees and allowances paid;
- The payment of staying put allowances;
- The payment of allowances to carers of children eligible to receive adoption, residence/child arrangement and special guardianship orders;
- Completion of financial assessments in respect of eligibility for adoption, residence/child arrangement and special guardianship orders;
- Payments to commissioned providers including Independent Fostering Agencies.

The provider will be required to have appropriate mechanisms in place to ensure that payments are linked to individual children and young people, allowing payments to be amended or to cease when individual circumstances of the child or young person change.

Specific arrangements on how to manage payments to providers of joint funded placements [i.e. placements where the cost is met by any combination of funding from the Permanency Service, the Dedicated Schools Grant and the Clinical Commissioning Group] will be agreed between the provider and the Council post contract award. Placement providers will want to receive payment from one source, which will mean that payment arrangements remain with the Council, which will re-charge the Permanency Service and the Clinical Commissioning Group as appropriate, or be managed by the Permanency Service, which will in turn re-charge the Council for the DSG element and the CCG as appropriate.

## 16. Governance and Quality Assurance

### 16.1 Governance Arrangements

The development of the Permanency Service relies on a commissioning arrangement between the Council and the successful provider. However, the nature of the services to be provided by the Permanency Service, together with the risks associated with the provision of services to vulnerable children and young people in care and on the edge of care and the financial risks associated with children in care services means that a very close partnership is required between the Provider and Council.

This close partnership will focus on ensuring the success of the Permanency Service; where the service becomes under pressure for any reason, the provider and Council will work together to resolve the issues.

Performance of the Permanency Service will be monitored through a range of qualitative and quantitative performance indicators as described in the sections below. Clause 23 and schedule 9 of the terms and conditions also describe performance monitoring mechanisms.

A number of forums will oversee and scrutinise the quality of the service provided by the Permanency Service, and provide opportunities to resolve any issues that are impacting on the overall outcomes achieved for children and young people. These forums include:

- **Council Corporate Parenting Panel and Scrutiny Committees:** The Permanency Service will be required to present reports detailing performance and identifying any challenge to the Corporate Parenting Panel and relevant Scrutiny Committees and any other Member forums of the Council as required;
- **The Joint Governance Board:** This board will meet at least quarterly and will be chaired by the Director of Children’s Services and include the Chief Executive Officer of the provider organisation, and relevant senior officers from the Council, the Permanency Service and any other partners. This group will focus on providing strategic leadership for the Permanency Service;
- **The Strategic Management Board:** This board will meet at least bi-monthly and include the Permanency Service’s lead officer and the lead contract/commissioning officers from the Council. It will be chaired by the Service Director for Children and Safeguarding. The focus of this group will be on the development of the partnership and associated service provision. As the Permanency Service becomes established, the work of this group may be subsumed into that of the Joint Governance and Operational Management Meeting;
- **The Operational Management Group:** The group will meet monthly; it will be chaired by the Commissioning lead for the Council, and include the relevant managers from the Permanency Service as well as key performance management officers, able to interpret the key performance information. Key managers from Council Services will also attend this meeting.

The main focus of these boards is as set out in the table below:

Joint Governance Board	Strategic Management Board	Operational Management Group
<p><b>Purpose:</b> Contract oversight, escalated concerns, decisions making forum for contract changes, budget oversight and sign off for data / performance targets and indicators</p> <p><b>Involving:</b> CEO/MD, directors, heads of service, commissioning and panel chairs</p> <p><b>Frequency:</b> Quarterly</p> <p><b>Agenda:</b> Performance data: exceptions and areas of note Escalated concerns – contract and practice Budget oversight Contract changes</p>	<p><b>Purpose:</b> Decision making forum for service development and design</p> <p><b>Involving:</b> Commissioning Lead for the Council; Head of Service for Permanency Service, other managers and partners as appropriate</p> <p><b>Frequency:</b> Bi-Monthly minimum initially</p> <p><b>Agenda:</b> Performance data Escalated concerns – practice issues Budget oversight Contract changes</p>	<p><b>Purpose:</b> Scrutiny of performance data, challenge and overview</p> <p><b>Involving:</b> Commissioning Lead for the Council; team managers and the Permanency Service’s lead officer and Council as appropriate and performance management officers</p> <p><b>Frequency:</b> Monthly</p> <p><b>Agenda:</b> Escalated concerns – practice issues Performance data Reporting oversight (see below) Adoption Fostering Permanency</p>

The boards will agree specific membership and terms of reference during the contract mobilisation period, post contract award.

A range of other meetings will take place as part of the operational day to day management of the Permanency Service, Council services for vulnerable children and young people and to ensure good communication across the partnership in the best interests of children and young people. These meetings will include:

- Monthly reconciliation of children on placement or similar orders with agreed likely dates for adoption to enable accurate forecasting;
- Leaving Care Services – monthly reconciliation on information regarding rising 18s with brief updates on Pathway Planning for all young people likely to be leaving care in the next year;
- Meeting with social work field teams – ongoing programme of visits or attendance at team meetings to ensure any issues are raised and addressed in a methodical manner in a climate of cooperation;

- Emergency Duty Service – participation in quarterly service discussions to ensure that out of hours placements are being accessed appropriately;
- Performance management service – ongoing communication, but with monthly reconciliation of information to ensure veracity of data;
- Finance Section – monthly budget reporting to ensure that live information can replace commitment forecasting to ensure accurate budget predictions;
- The Permanency Service will be required to attend meetings focused on ensuring preparation for OfSTED and similar inspections as required.

There will also be a number of other meetings where attendance by appropriate personnel from the Permanency Service will be required. These will be focused on the need of individual children and will include the following:

- Statutory reviews for children and young people in care;
- Personal Education Plan meetings as appropriate;
- Permanency planning meetings and any tracking meetings necessary to ensure that permanency plans including plans for adoption are being progressed appropriately;
- The Peterborough Access to Support Panel and Joint Access to Support Panel [PASP and JASP];
- Secure accommodation panel meetings to assess whether threshold for secure accommodation is achieved.

This is not an exhaustive list and will change over time. The key expectation is that the Council and Permanency Service will work together openly and proactively to secure the best outcomes for the children and young people for whom they share responsibility, ensuring that opportunities for communication and partnership working are maximised at all times.

## 16.2. Quality Performance Indicators and Performance Reporting

### 16.2.1. Purpose

In order to ensure a consistent and excellent level of service, the Permanency service will maintain specific information exchanges and report live and accurate qualitative and quantitative performance data.

Use of Liquid Logic as the recording system for all activities managed by the Permanency Service will enable performance reports to be run on a wide range of key performance indicators.

The Council is currently updating its' performance reporting software, which will enable the Permanency Service, with the support of the Council's Performance Team, to generate a wide range of live performance reports covering all aspects of activity.

It will be the responsibility of the Permanency Service to ensure that all records on Liquid Logic are accurate and that recording [for example of visits to foster carers] are recorded in a timely way, and no more than 72 hours after the event.

### 16.2.2. Principles

The Permanency Service and the Council's performance management team will work together to ensure that accurate data returns are provided to OfSTED, the Department for Education, the Adoption Leadership Board, the Eastern Region of the Association of Directors of Children's Services, and any additional statutory requirements throughout the life of the contract. Prior to submission of returns, approval and sign off is required by a designated senior member of staff at the local

authority, which will in most cases be the Commissioning Lead but may be another officer as agreed within the Joint Governance Board.

The Permanency Service will also be responsible for providing responses to all other legitimate requests for information that cover the work of the service, including requests made under Freedom of Information legislation. The Council's Performance Team will again assist with such requests.

The Permanency Service will operate a performance management system to gather and analyse a range of information to chart progress and give an early warning of issues affecting the quality of outcomes for children so that corrective action can be taken.

The Permanency Service will operate a quality assurance approach that will engender the delivery of high standards of practice, learning, accountability and continual service development. The Permanency Service will also work with the Council's Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service so that themed audits on a variety of practice issues and dip samples of case files are undertaken. The Permanency Service will use the outcomes of such audits to develop action plans to ensure the continuous improvement of practice.

In addition to locally generated performance data, the Permanency Service will work with the Council's Performance Management Team to review and analyse published data to assess performance against statistical neighbours and regional and national benchmarks. Current sources of data include Department for Education statistical releases, the Adoption Scorecard, Adoption Leadership Board quarterly statistics, OfSTED Fostering dataset and Eastern Region benchmarking.

An accurate database is key to good data reporting. Therefore the Permanency Service will record information using the agreed child, adopter and foster carer case management system, all placement information including changes of placements, and specifically placements for adoption, without exception.

The Permanency Service should update the case management system within 24 hours of a placement change. In exceptional circumstances (public holidays for example) this period can be extended to 72 hours.

The Permanency Service will check the case management system routinely after a weekend to ensure placement moves outside of office hours are captured.

Any discrepancies in record keeping of placements will be addressed and corrected without delay.

The majority of monthly performance information and reporting is numerical and data driven, however upward and downward trends need to be supported by the appropriate analysis and commentary including service user and case level detail.

It is expected that the Permanency Service will benchmark the service against the good and outstanding descriptors set out by OfSTED within their current inspection framework.

The Permanency Service will provide a quarterly staff performance report detailing issues including turnover of staff, analysis of exit interviews, disciplinary processes, average caseloads, sickness levels, key themes from staff feedback and the percentage of staff receiving timely casework supervision.

The Permanency Service cannot be held accountable for areas of poorer performance inherited from services as operated directly by the Council. However, where any such areas of poorer performance

exist, it will be an expectation that the Permanency Service focuses attention on delivering sustained improvements.

It should be noted that performance in relation to placement stability as measured by the number of children or young people who have three or more placements and on the number of placements that last for more than two years in Peterborough is good on both measures. Adoption performance is also good in the City.

### 16.2.3. Data Platforms

To monitor and evaluate the service provided, the Permanency Service will provide and is required to report its performance in various ways. These can broadly be summarised by 3 key platforms as follows:

- **Scorecard** detailing key performance indicators;
- **Qualitative reporting** including – service user feedback, auditing activity and external scrutiny;
- **Detailed performance report** detailed data report covering all delivery functions;

The Permanency Service will have the lead responsibility in the production of numerical performance reports. The Council's Performance Team will provide advice and guidance on the production of reports and input into the interpretation of the data provided.

#### **Scorecard**

The monthly scorecard performance report will include performance data relating to the following activities:

##### Adoption

- The number of children and young people adopted during the year - measured year to date;
- The number of children and young people waiting to be adopted (with a placement order but not yet placed) – as at month end;
- The number and percentage of children and young people waiting for longer than 18 months (from entering care to being placed for adoption). Percentage as a proportion of all children and young people with a placement order – measured year to date;
- The number of approved adopters waiting to be matched with children and young people – as at month end.

##### Fostering

- The number and percentage of all children and young people in foster placements who are placed in an in-house provision. Percentage as a proportion of all children and young people in foster placements – as at month end;
- The number and percentage of all children and young people in foster placements who are placed in an agency provision. Percentage as a proportion of all children and young people in foster placements – as at month end;
- The number of approved fostering households – as at month end;
- The number of approved fostering places – as at month end;
- The net increase in the number of approved foster places – measured year to date;
- The percentage of In-house fostering places that are vacant as a proportion of the total number of approved fostering places – as at month end;

- The number of foster carers who have been assessed as permanent carers for children and young people under Child Arrangement or Special Guardianship Orders;
- The number of Family Group Conferences on a quarterly basis, and an analysis of outcomes 6 months and 12 months post conference.

#### Children in care

- The number of children and young people in care and provided a statutory social work service by the permanency service – as at month end;
- The percentage of all children or young people under the age of 16 in foster placements who have been looked after continuously for at least 2.5 years who were living in the same placement for at least 2 years – measured year to date
- The percentage of all children or young people in care with three or more foster placements as a proportion of all children or young people in care – measured year to date;
- The number of children and young people permanently matched with carers at year end;
- Timeliness of completion of Child Arrangement and Special Guardianship Orders in court proceedings;
- Percentage of assessments presented to court where recommendations are accepted.

#### Leaving care

- The number of care leavers (aged 18 and older) who are supported by the permanency service – as at month end.

#### General

- The annual staff turnover rate for the permanency service – measured rolling twelve months.

#### Budget Reporting

As noted in the finance section of this specification, separate reporting on all areas of budget activity will be required on a monthly basis.

#### Qualitative Reporting

A key measure of evaluating the success of the Permanency Service will be thematic audits. The Council's Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service will work with the Permanency Service to produce at least four thematic practice audits over a 12 month period. These audits will be designed to surface qualitative information about the quality of practice and service delivery. The themes of these audits will be decided by the Joint Governance Board.

'We want a service with the highest aspirations for children but that has realistic expectations about the support that they need...'

'We want a service that never gives up on children...'

Staff description of what they want from a Permanency Service

In addition to these themed audits, a number of other elements will be in place to provide qualitative information about service delivery and the extent to which positive outcomes are achieved for children and young people. These include:

- **Adoption and fostering panels:** These panels are able to report on the quality of the work of the Permanency Service [and of the quality of work by the directly operated Council social work services]. Panel chairs will be members of the Strategic Management Group and will report on any practice issues that require attention. The Council will also be represented on each adoption and fostering panel. Regular business meetings will also be held between the Permanency Service, the independent panel chairs and the lead Commissioner from the Council and these meeting will provide a forum within which any day to day matters can be addressed;
- **Independent Chairs and Reviewing Officers:** Chairs of statutory reviews for children and young people in care have an important role to play in supporting and challenging the work of the Council and of the new Permanency Service, particularly in respect of progressing plans for permanency and addressing any issues around the quality of the placement. Independent chairs will raise any concerns that they may have both informally, via case alerts and through the statutory formal dispute mechanism. Any such concerns that are raised about services provided by the Permanency Service must be responded to within the required timeframes. The Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance will provide a summary report of any key themes and issues arising from these processes for discussion and action at the Operational Management Group. Issues that cannot be addressed within this forum will be escalated to the Strategic Management Group;
- **Service user feedback:** Service user feedback forms an important measure of the quality of overall services. There is extensive information about the extent to which the Permanency Service is expected to seek the involvement and participation of service users in the planning and delivery of services in general as well as in relation to individual plans. The Permanency Service will be required to provide a 6-monthly report analysing key themes from service user feedback. The Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service will also provide support in identifying themes from service user feedback, through the independent chairs and through liaison with the Child in Care Council and via routine feedback activities including questionnaires;
- **Response to Complaints:** Complaints about services offered by the Permanency Service will mostly be required to be considered under the statutory Children Act 1989 complaints process. This process includes timescales for the response to complaints depending on the stage at which the complaint is being managed. A child-centred and responsive service will see and respond to complaints as a positive opportunity to change processes and practices in accordance with the voice of users of the service. The Permanency Service will be required to demonstrate how it has learned from complaints; this information will feed into the annual report provided by the Council's Complaints Service and as reported to the Corporate Parenting Panel and relevant Scrutiny Committees.

#### **Detailed Performance Reporting: Monthly Management Performance Requirements**

The following performance measures will be required on a monthly basis, and are in line with those that are currently produced by the services in partnership with the Council's Performance Team. This level of reporting is required in order to identify any early patterns or trends that may require corrective action or may be needed in order to inform strategic functions of the Permanency Service, including recruitment strategies for adopters and fostering households.

## Fostering service

- The number and percentage of all children and young people in foster placements who are placed in an in-house provision. Percentage as a proportion of all children and young people in foster placements – as at month end
- The number and percentage of all children and young people in foster placements who are placed in an agency provision. Percentage as a proportion of all children and young people in foster placements – as at month end
- The number of fostering enquiries received – measured year to date
- The number of assessments in progress – as at month end
- The number of approved fostering households – as at month end
- The number of approved fostering places – as at month end
- The number of new foster places approved – measured year to date
- The number of approved foster places terminated – measured year to date
- The net increase in the number of approved foster places – measured year to date
- The proportion of new fostering households from black and minority ethnic communities
- The percentage of In-house fostering places that are vacant as a proportion of the total number of approved fostering places – as at month end;
- The number of fostering households at month end [including permanent long-term, short term, emergency, family and friend, parent and child placement, remand, short break and supported lodgings];
- The number of sibling groups placed together and the percentage of sibling groups placed together as a proportion of all sibling groups placed – measured year to date
- The number of individual siblings placed apart due to a resource shortfall – measured year to date
- The number of foster carers without an annual review in the preceding 12 months – measured year to date
- The number of foster carers not visited by a social worker for a statutory visit within the preceding 6 weeks – as at month end
- The number of complaints received – measured year to date
- The number of allegations received against foster carers – measured year to date
- The number of unplanned endings of placements that occurred at the request of the foster carer – measured year to date
- The number of unplanned endings of that occurred for any other reason other than at the request of the foster carer – measured year to date
- The number of children in care who have been matched for permanency at panel and the percentage of children matched for permanency as a proportion of all children in care – measured year to date
- The percentage of all children or young people under the age of 16 in foster placements who have been looked after continuously for at least 2.5 years who were living in the same placement for at least 2 years – measured year to date
- The percentage of all children or young people in care with three or more foster placements as a proportion of all children or young people in care – measured year to date
- The educational progress made by children and young people at KS2 and 4, or equivalent measures as these are available – measured annually
- The percentage of annual medical reviews undertaken that are informed by a Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire – measured year to date

- The number of children and young people participating in their statutory reviews and the percentage as a proportion of all reviews for children in care (aged at least 4 at the time of the review) – measured year to date.

### **Fostering Panel Activity**

- The number of new fostering households approved
- The number of reviews heard by panel – measured year to date
- The number of ADM decisions that differ from the fostering panel’s recommendation – measured year to date
- The number of panel recommendations to permanently match a child or young person to their current placement – measured year to date

### **Private fostering arrangements**

- The number of children currently living under private fostering arrangements – as at month end
- The number of private fostering referrals received – measured year to date
- The number of private fostering assessments carried out within require timescales – measured year to date
- The proportion of private fostering assessments completed within timescales

### **Adoption service**

- The number of registrations (enquiries) – measured year to date
- The number of approved adopters – as at month end
- The proportion of new adopters from black and minority ethnic communities
- The number of adoptive families matched to children and young people – as at month end
- The number of adoptive families with children and young people placed with them – as at month end
- The number of children and young people adopted during the year - measured year to date
- The number of prospective adopters not yet approved – as at month end
- The number of approved adopters waiting to be matched with children and young people – as at month end
- The number of children and young people for whom the permanence decision has changed away from adoption – measured year to date
- The number of children and young people waiting to be adopted – as at month end
- The number of children and young people waiting to be adopted (with a placement order but not yet placed) – as at month end
- The number and percentage of children and young people waiting for longer than 18 months (from entering care to being placed for adoption). Percentage as a proportion of all children and young people with a placement order – measured year to date
- The number of agency decisions that adoption is in the child or young person’s best interests – measured year to date
- The number of inter-agency placements – measured year to date
- The number of Peterborough adopters matched with children or young people from another local authority – as at month end
- The number of adoptions made for children and young people defined as ‘hard to place’ (aged 5 or more, sibling group of 2 or more, disability, black and minority ethnic) - measured year to date

- The number of children and young people who are defined as 'hard to place' and who are currently waiting to be placed – as at month end
- The number of adoption disruptions – measured year to date

#### **Adoption panel activity**

- The number of adopters approved – measured year to date
- The number of matches approved – measured year to date

#### **Adoption support service**

- The number of active adoption support referrals – measured year to date
- The number of adoption support referrals waiting to receive a service – as at month end
- The number of access to records request referrals – measured year to date
- The number of post-box contact files – measured year to date
- The number of children and young people placed for adoption without a life story book – as at month end
- The number of children and young people adopted without a later life letter – measured year to date

#### **Special Guardianship**

- The proportion of Special Guardianship Order assessments completed within the initially agreed timescale as a percentage of all assessments completed - measured year to date
- The proportion of Special Guardianship Order assessments accepted by the court as a percentage of all those presented – measured year to date
- The proportion of children who left care because a Special Guardianship Order was granted as a percentage of all children who left care – measured year to date
- The number of unplanned endings of Special Guardianship Order arrangements – measured year to date
- The number of Special Guardianship Order carers appropriately accessing post order support – measured year to date
- The proportion of Special Guardianship Order carers who are kept in touch with as a percentage of all Special Guardianship Order carers – measured year to date

#### **For 'return home' support services**

- The number of children returning home to family who become looked after again within the following 6 months
- The number of children returning home to family who become looked after again within the following 12 months

#### **For children and young people permanently matched to 'in-house' carers:**

- The number of children and young people in care and supported by the permanency service (below the age of 18) – as at month end
- The number of children and young people ceasing to be the responsibility of the permanency service – measured year to date
- The number of children and young people matched for permanency and newly responsible to the permanency service – measured year to date
- The number of statutory visits not completed within timescale and the percentage of these as a proportion of all children in care who are the responsibility of the permanency service – as at month end

- The number of childcare reviews not completed within timescale and the percentage of these as a proportion of all childcare reviews completed for children in care – measured year to date
- The number of children and young people who have been in care for at least 12 months that have not had an annual health assessments completed within the previous twelve months – as at month end
- The number of children and young people (aged 3 to 17 years) who have not had a dental check within the previous 12 months – as at month end
- The number of children and young people of statutory school age who are not in education – as at month end
- The number of children and young people not on target with their personal education plans / educational attainment forecasts – as at month end
- The number of children and young people without a completed Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) – as at month end
- The number of children and young people without an allocated qualified social worker – as at month end

#### **For young people leaving care, supported by the Permanency Service:**

- The number of care leavers (aged 18 and older) who are supported by the permanency service – as at month end
- The number of care leavers supported by the permanency service in staying put arrangements – measured year to date
- The proportion of care leavers supported by the permanency service who are not in education, employment or training – measured annually
- The proportion of care leavers supported by the permanency service who are in suitable accommodation - measured annually
- The proportion of care leavers supported by the permanency service who are not in contact with the service – measured annually
- The proportion of care leavers (under the age of 18) supported by the permanency service with a pathway plan that has been updated within the last 6 months and the percentage of these as a proportion of all care leavers (under the age of 18) supported by the permanency service – measured year to date

#### **General**

- The annual staff turnover rate for the permanency service – measured rolling twelve months
- The annual staff turnover rate for social workers – measured rolling twelve months
- The annual staff turnover rate for support workers – measured rolling twelve months.

These measures should be broken down to show voluntary and non-voluntary turnover figures.

#### **Amendments to Performance Monitoring post contract award**

The areas of performance monitoring noted in this section and the frequency of reporting will be subject to further negotiation following the award of the contract and during the mobilisation period. This is in order to ensure that the correct balance is achieved in relation to undertaking activities that lead to improved outcomes for children and young people and ensuring that these activities are taking place. These negotiations will also include the role and contribution of the Council's quality assurance and performance management functions in supporting the Permanency Service to report on qualitative and quantitative aspects of performance.

## 17. Decision Making Arrangements & Practice Issues Dispute Resolution

In general terms, the Council will retain decision making in respect of making plans for individual children and young people. The Council will make the decision about whether a child should become looked after, and must agree to any changes of placement once a child is looked after. The Council must also approve any decision for a child or young person to no longer be looked after, except where this is a result of the young person concerned achieving the age of 18.

The decision making processes in respect of children and young people returning to their parents must also comply with the Care Planning and Placement Regulations 2013 and the Placement with Parent Regulations 2010 as appropriate.

The Council will retain the Agency Decision Maker functions as these apply to children, and will make the final decision that leads to a child being matched with foster for adoption carers and prospective adopters. The Council will also make the decision about whether a child's plan should be for adoption. For any relinquished children, following their presentation at adoption panel, the Council will also make a final decision on the plan.

Decisions about changes of placement must be agreed by the relevant Head of Service within the Council, or the Head of Service providing cover during any period of leave or other absence.

Decisions relating to the change of any placement of a child or young person for whom the Permanency Service has statutory social work responsibility must be agreed by the Head of Service for Children in Care or the Commissioning Lead; such a placement change will usually result with responsibility for the child or young person transferring back to the local authority in any event.

Decisions relating to the return home of any child or young person for whom the Permanency Service holds statutory social work responsibility need to be agreed by the appropriate Head of Service [and comply with any other regulatory requirement that may apply]. The appropriate Head of Service will need to agree a transition period where the Permanency Service social worker continues to support the child or young person and their family before any on-going family support needs are met within the Council's Family Support service. No child or young person should return home without a re-assessment. This reassessment will identify the extent to which the factors that led to the child becoming looked after have changed.

It is inevitable that there will be occasions where there are differences of opinion about the correct course of action in respect of individual children and young people. Such circumstances may relate to the suitability of placements identified by the Permanency Service for children and young people, or the viability of any family plan agreed within a Family Group Conference.

Key decisions about children and young people will be made in joint forums in most situations – PASP and JASP for example – and decisions made in such circumstances will be binding on all parties except where there are significant safeguarding concerns or concerns about the wellbeing of a child or young person. Where such concerns exist, these should be escalated to the immediate line manager of the person who holds the concerns. The line manager will then follow the process outlined below.

The expectation is that all such differences of opinion will be managed at the lowest point in the respective hierarchies of the Permanency Service and Council as possible. This means that

practitioners should first attempt to discuss any disagreements directly, and should only escalate to their line managers where common ground cannot be identified.

In the event that the relevant immediate line managers are unable to reach agreement, the issue should be escalated to the relevant Head of Service in the Council or Service Manager for the Permanency Service. The lead Commissioner for the local authority may become involved at this point in order to help to facilitate agreement.

In the unlikely event that disagreements remain, the matter should be escalated to the Assistant Director for Children's Social Care, who will bring interested parties together, listen to all views and make what should ordinarily be accepted by all parties as the final decision.

In the very unlikely event that agreement is still not reached, the CEO of the Provider will be able to raise the issue with the Service Director for Children and Safeguarding. In the event that agreement can still not be reached, the final decision maker will be the Director of Children's Services.

Any issues that have required the intervention of the Assistant Director or higher to become involved in resolution will be discussed at the next Joint Governance Board in order that any lessons can be learned.

## 18. Relationships with other Partners and other Agencies

The Permanency Service will be required to develop and maintain positive working relationships with key partners within the Council and among the broader network of agencies providing services for children and young people in care and/or for whom the Permanency Service has a duty of care. Partners and agencies include:

- Children's Social Care including assessment, care planning functions, independent chairs;
- Early Help Services, particularly in respect of developing sustainable support plans for children and young people returning to the care of their parents or carers having been looked after;
- The Youth Offending Service, particularly in respect of developing and supporting fostering households to meet the needs of young people who have been remanded into local authority accommodation;
- The Virtual School and in particular in working together to improve educational outcomes for children and young people in care and in preparation for those leaving care to permanent arrangements;
- Special educational needs services and in particular in relation to supporting children and young people with Education, Health and Care plans to achieve their full potential;
- Local colleges, schools and services to support young people who may be at risk of being not in education, employment or employment;
- Housing services and in particular in respect of developing plans for young people leaving care or moving on from Staying Put arrangements for whom the Permanency Service has accountability;
- Local providers of supported accommodation for young people aged 16 and 17, including The Foyer and contracted semi-independent providers of accommodation;
- Child and adolescent mental health services, currently provided by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Foundation Trust, and in particular to ensure that children and young people in care have access to specialist support for emotional and mental health issues through the specially commissioned service for children and young people in care and care leavers;

- Providers of community and other health services, currently mostly provided by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Foundation Trust, including ensuring that children and young people in care have access to regular reviews of their health needs, including emotional and mental health, and that children and young people returning home or leaving care for other permanent care arrangements have access to appropriate health care;
- Commissioned advocacy services in order to ensure that children in care are supported to make any representations or complaints about the services that they receive;
- The Council's complaints' service and including ensuring that complaints are dealt with under the appropriate legislation, are progressed within expected timings but are investigated thoroughly and any lessons learned are implemented across the service;
- The Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board and chair, and in particular to ensure that the Board maintains confidence in the safeguarding arrangements in place by the provider in respect of the Permanency Service.

## 19. Contract Escalation Procedures

This service specification and the contract between the Provider and the Council is built on the foundation of trust and mutual determination of the parties to work together to secure the best possible outcomes for children and young people, while securing effective use of resources.

The approach to management of disputes is in line with this ethos. The emphasis is on seeking informal means to resolve any disagreements or disputes at the lowest point in the respective hierarchies of the Permanency Service and Local Authority as possible.

The quarterly Joint Governance Board is the principal mechanism for ensuring that any areas of potential disagreement or dispute are discussed and resolved, where it has not proved possible to do so informally.

In the unlikely event that such approaches are unable to resolve the difficulty, a formal dispute resolution meeting will be called. This meeting will include:

- The Chief Executive Officer of the partner providing the Permanency Service
- The Director of Children's Services in Peterborough City Council, who will also chair the meeting;
- The senior Council contracting officer or equivalent responsible for the performance and quality monitoring of the service provided.

Should this formal meeting be unsuccessful in resolving the matter, the parties will refer the matter to the Dispute Resolution Procedure set out in Schedule 20 of the Terms and Conditions.

### 19.1. In the event of Contract Expiry or Termination

Foster carers and adopters who were either originally recruited by Peterborough City Council before the commencement of the contract or who have been recruited as a result of the contract, will transfer to Peterborough City Council, assuming that this is in line with their wishes. Where carers wish to remain with the partner agency, any children in placement who are in the care of Peterborough City Council will remain in placement. Placement costs will be maintained in line with the unit placement cost for children and young people in foster care at the time the contract ends, and not in line with the fee usually charged by the provider.

The exit strategy set out in Schedule 15 of the Terms and Conditions describes the detail of these arrangements.

## 20. Expected Characteristics of a Successful Partner

We are seeking a single partner organisation to operate the full scope of this service specification.

This service will be responsible for meeting the needs of the most vulnerable children and young people in the City. This means that any partner organisation will be required to demonstrate an established track record of success in delivering high quality fostering and adoption services, as evidenced by demonstrable improved outcomes for children and young people as well as external validation through OfSTED inspections.

Evidence of success in delivering improved outcomes can be provided by measures including:

- Placement stability rates for children placed with foster carers;
- Long-term adoption placement disruption rates;
- Successful recruitment and retention of foster carers;
- Successful recruitment of adopters and in particular, adopters able to provide homes for older children, sibling groups and children with complex or uncertain future needs;
- Long term levels of staff turnover.

Under the 2008 Children and Young Person's Act, local authority adoption functions can only be delegated to a registered adoption society. "Registered adoption society" has the meaning given by section 2(2) of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (c. 38). This is:

(1)The services maintained by local authorities under section 3(1) may be collectively referred to as "the Adoption Service", and a local authority or registered adoption society may be referred to as an adoption agency.

(2)In this Act, "registered adoption society" means a voluntary organisation which is an adoption society registered under Part 2 of the Care Standards Act 2000 (c. 14); but in relation to the provision of any facility of the Adoption Service, references to a registered adoption society or to an adoption agency do not include an adoption society which is not registered in respect of that facility.

In addition, the intention to transfer some limited statutory services to individual children and young people in care to the new Permanency Service means that the partner agency cannot be a body corporate that operates on a for profit basis, as set out in Statutory Instrument 2014, Number 2407.

## 21. Possible areas for further post award negotiation

This service specification covers a range of complex areas of service delivery. It is likely that some areas of the specification may require further detailed negotiation post contract award and during the mobilisation period. These areas will not have a significant impact on the service specification and will not have any impact on contract value. Any such changes will be agreed in line with the Change Control Procedure under schedule 15 of the terms and conditions.

Areas where there may be a need for further clarity and negotiation over fine details include:

- Where posts transfer to the new provider, but a small area of the post-holders' responsibility will continue to be required to deliver activities for the Council. This is unlikely to affect more than five posts in total;
- As noted elsewhere in this service specification, there may be a need to agree the detail of the frequency of performance reporting by the Provider to ensure that the balance is correct in terms of assuring compliance and accountability with the effort required to produce the data;

- The mechanism for ensuring the transfer of foster carers to the new provider will depend on clarity from the DFE and OfSTED in respect of the detail of the transfer arrangements. The aim will be to seek agreement for carers to transfer in line with the annual review mechanism;
- Arrangements for managing the payment of jointly funded placements for children and young people in care.

The above is not an exhaustive list and there are likely to be other areas where it will be beneficial to enable some further limited negotiation post contract award, where such negotiations do not make a substantive difference to the overall value of the contract or the effect of these service specifications.

There will also be freedom to extend the provision of the contract to other areas of related service delivery in the event that the service is operating effectively and there is a clear rationale for doing so. An example of the way that this contract may be extended in this way may include a decision to include more aspects of or all of the Leaving and After Care service.

## 22. Intellectual Property Rights – Permanency Service

The Council is the owner of all intellectual property rights in relation to this Permanency Service Specification, and in the material published on it. This applies to this current version and all future versions of this specification associated with the brand name “Permanency Service”.

The bidder may print off one copy, and may download extracts, of any page(s) from the Supplier Force website for and draw the attention of others within your organisation to material posted on this site.

Bidders must not modify the paper or digital copies of any materials printed or downloaded in any way, and must not use any illustrations, or any graphics separately from any accompanying text.

The Council’s status (and that of any identified contributors) as the authors of material must always be acknowledged.

Bidders must not use any part of this specification for commercial purposes.

If Bidders print off, copy or download any part of the Permanency Service Specification including future versions in breach of these terms of use, then the right to use this material will cease immediately and Bidders must, at the Council’s option, return or destroy any and all copies of the materials.