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Permanency Service Draft Summary Specification

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DRAFT



Lou Williams

SERVICE DIRECTOR CHILDREN AND SAFEGUARDING

Developing a new Permanency Service in Peterborough: An Introduction

This summary specification describes our proposals to develop a new service, which we are calling a Permanency Service, in collaboration with an external partner organisation. We believe that this new service will deliver better outcomes for children and young people in care and on the edge of care, while securing improved value for money.

Peterborough City Council [‘the Council’] is determined to improve outcomes for children and young people who come into the care of the Council. 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 able 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 to foster carers, to carers of children and young people who have Special Guardianship Orders or improving the support available to children and their families where children return home after a period in care means that we must 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 we may have more success if we develop a much closer working relationship with a strategic partner.

Although this will lead to the tendering of some of our currently provided services to a third party provider, it will be essential for very close working relationships to be maintained between

Peterborough City Council and the provider, which means that there will be an on-going need for defined and close governance arrangements.

This draft summary service specification is intended to assist potential partners to understand our proposals and to seek clarifications on any matters during the soft market testing phase.

The table below summarises the proposed responsibilities of the Council and Provider in relation to current services and resources, in the event that the Permanency Service is established:

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"> • Assessments of children in need; • Social work functions relating to children in need, in need of protection and most children who are looked after [see below]; • Most leaving and aftercare services; 	<p>The Fostering & Adoption Service, involving the TUPE transfer of around 26FTE members of staff and activities including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment of fostering and adoptive carers; • Support and training activities for staff and carers; • Operation and management of panels; • Agency decision maker responsibilities as applying to adopters and foster carers; • Post adoption support functions; • Private fostering; • Non-agency adoption.
<p>Agency Decision Maker role as this relates to Children and Young People</p>	<p>Foster carers currently approved by the Council</p>
<p>Conference chairs, looked after reviewing officers</p>	<p>Prospective adopters currently approved by the Council</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>Some assessment functions of prospective carers under Special Guardianship Orders</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>Advocacy Services</p>	<p>Children in Care Participation Responsibilities</p>
<p>Children Act Complaints Services</p>	<p>Placement budgets for children in care:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fees and Allowances for in-house carers; • Budget for IFA foster placements; • Council budget contribution to joint funded residential placements; • Budgets for residential placements; • Budgets for transport for children in care; • Budget for cost of placements for Unaccompanied Minors; • Budgets for payment of Special Guardianship Order allowances • Budget for payment of Adoption Allowances; • Budget associated with Staying Put arrangements.

Fostering and Adoption Services

It is proposed that all social workers, the panel adviser and the two team managers, will transfer to a new provider under TUPE. There are approximately 26FTE staff in these categories. A number of business support staff assist in the work of the service. These workers are currently employed by SERCO. It is not yet clear whether they would transfer under TUPE Arrangements.

Fostering Services

The new service would be required to operate a comprehensive fostering service that at least meets the requirements of the National Minimum Standards.

The key outcomes required from the new service will include:

- Successful recruitment of carers able to meet the needs of children and young people with more complex needs [and in particular, able to care for teenagers] in order that reliance on IFA placements is reduced;
- Successful retention of existing foster carers;
- Successful recruitment of foster carers from all sections of the diverse communities of Peterborough;
- Promotion of Special Guardianship Orders for children placed in long term foster care, where this is in line with their best interests.

Our foster carers have told us that in order to be more confident in meeting the needs of more complex children and young people in care, they need:

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

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

- All duties and responsibilities set out within the Fostering National Minimum Standards and all other relevant legislation;
- Recruitment, assessment, training and support of foster carers including relative or connected carers;
- Statutory private fostering responsibilities;
- 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.

Adoption Services

The new 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.

The key outcomes for the service will include:

- Successful recruitment of adopters able to meet the diverse needs of children in Peterborough and contribute towards the regional and national drives 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.

Placement Finding Service

Approximately two FTE employees will transfer to the new service in order to facilitate placement finding for children and young people coming into care for the first time, and for those who need to change placements.

This service will identify foster placements with both 'in-house' and externally provided foster carers, as well as residential placements, including children's homes and specialist residential placements that include therapeutic support and education.

The service will also identify semi-independent accommodation for young people aged 16 and 17, and accommodation for young people aged 18 and above who have no recourse to public funds – most commonly young people who arrived in the country as unaccompanied minors seeking asylum.

The service will not be responsible for identifying 38 week education funded boarding school placements for pupils with special educational needs.

Social workers for children and young people need to agree that placements identified for children and young people are suitable. An escalation policy will be established to manage situations where agreement on placement suitability cannot be reached.

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 there is a risk that they may otherwise come into the care system.

Family Group Conferences will often be the forum where relatives who may be able to provide long term care for a child through a Special Guardianship or Residence Order are identified.

It is often helpful in terms of outcomes that Family Group Conferences are convened and facilitated independently of the Council's social work assessment and other statutory functions.

Assessing Prospective Special Guardians

Around 30 children and young people are placed with special guardians from care 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].

As is the case in other areas, 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 carer 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.

A small resource may need to transfer to the new service to enable the service to meet the proposed obligations in this area. The amount of resource is yet to be confirmed.

Statutory Social Work Functions for Children Looked After & 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, the social work functions in respect of these children will transfer to the new 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 a family setting.

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.

It is not envisaged that this function will require a significant amount of transfer of resources. It is likely that no more than 2-3 social work posts and no more than one personal adviser post would transfer to the new service to support this function.

Participation: Children and Young People in Care and Care Leavers

It is essential that children and young people in care and leaving care are able to contribute to the continuous improvement of services.

It is also essential that the achievements of children and young people in care and care leavers are celebrated. Such activities create an environment where all those working with and responsible for children and young people have the highest aspirations for their futures.

Finally, it is essential that children and young people in care and who have left care are able to have opportunities to meet up in a safe way with others who have similar shared experiences. Such opportunities help to build resilience among children and young people, by helping to establish mutually supportive peer groups that function in addition to more broadly based friendship groups that are not related to being in care.

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.

These functions would be delegated to the new service, which would be expected to establish new and innovative approaches to facilitating the participation of children and young people in care and care leavers. Up to one full time member of staff may transfer to the new service, but this is to be confirmed.

Information and Communication Technology

The new 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.

The new 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.

Budgets

It is proposed that all placement related budgets will transfer to the new 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.

Draft placement budgets for 2016/17 are set out in the table below:

PLACEMENT TYPE	BUDGET
16+ ACCOMODATION / SUBSISTANCE	£848,000
INDEPENDENT AGENCY FOSTERING	£3,750,000
AGENCY RESIDENTIAL [SOCIAL CARE COST]	£2,000,000
IN HOUSE FOSTERING	£2,252,000
FAMILY AND FRIENDS – CONNECTED CARERS	£300,000
ADOPTION ALLOWANCE	£700,000
WELFARE SECURE – SOCIAL CARE COST	£181,000
ASYLUM SEEKERS	£553,000
NO RECOURSE TO PUBLIC FUNDS	£90,000
CLAIM FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS	-£553,000
TOTAL LAC PLACEMENT BUDGETS	£10,121,000
NON LAC GENERAL FUND PLACEMENTS	
LAC EDUCATION	£60,000
STAYING PUT	£202,260
RESIDENCE ORDER	£243,083
SPECIAL GUARDIANSHIP ORDER	£661,639
TOTAL NON LAC PLACEMENT PRESSURES	£1,166,982
TOTAL	£11,287,982

Savings to be applied to the above budgets are as follows:

- 2016/17: Nil
- 2017/18: £650,000
- 2018/19 – a further £250,000 saving to be applied.

These savings will be achieved by a steady reduction in the use of IFA placements [there are currently around 97 children and young people in such placements] or by reduced use of residential care. The new 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.

There will be provision in the agreement to allow for the financial impact of an unexpected increase in numbers of children and young people in care from current numbers, which typically range between 350 and 360

Staffing costs for the Fostering and Adoption Service, including on costs, is approximately £1.15M per annum. These costs do not include associated costs such as travel expenditure and subsistence. Business support costs are also not included. There will be a small number of additional posts that are likely to transfer to the new service, as described in the sections above, including:

- Placement Finding Service
- Family Group Conference Coordinator;
- A small number of qualified social worker posts associated with assessment of Special Guardianship Order carers and 'permanently' placed children in 'in-house' foster placements.

Transparency

The new service will be expected to operate on the basis of open-book accounting. In the event that there are additional surpluses generated after allowing for the areas of investment in the 'Expected Service Developments' sections below, these will be used for further investment in services for children and young people in Peterborough and/or to contribute to additional savings targets facing the Council in future years.

The new service will not generate a profit for the operator, and there will be no provision for the payment of bonuses or dividends.

Expected Service Developments

Improving Support to 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.

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.

This group of carers are likely to face challenges of a similar nature 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 included in this proposal. 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.

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 be expected to 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 and 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.

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 the new service to improve outcomes for this group of children and young people by developing new and innovative approaches to supporting the effective return home, so that such moves result in successful permanency.

Developing capacity within the Family Group Conferencing Service [FGCS]

The current level of resources within the FGCS 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 in the FGCS.

Quality Assurance

Outline Performance Indicators

A full range of quality performance indicators will be included in the final service specification. The following are examples only; a mixture of both quantitative and qualitative indicators will be used to measure performance and ensure that children and young people achieve the best possible outcomes.

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 nett 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 mainstream, connected, short break/respite 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 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 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
- 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 – 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 children and young people placed with an adopter who is located outside of the local authority boundary – as at month end
- 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 not 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 worker – measured rolling twelve months

Qualitative measures of performance will be fully developed for the final specification. They are likely to include a range of measures including results of satisfaction surveys of children and young people, carers and members of staff.

Transparency

The new service will be subject to case file and other audits as carried out by the Council's Quality Assurance Service.

There is a planned audit programme in place that routinely assesses the quality of planning, management oversight and recording as evidenced within client records for children and their carers. This programme will continue.

A programme of dip-samples of practice also takes place across all services, and this programme will also continue.

Where practice development areas are identified, an action plan will be required from the new service. Progress against such action plans will be monitored within the joint governance board, as described in the section below.

Expected Governance Arrangements

The proposed Permanency Service will be a critical partner for the local authority in terms of delivering improved outcomes for children and young people in care and on the edge of care. Its importance requires that there are strong governance arrangements in place.

It is likely that the final specification will include a Governance Board, chaired by the Corporate Director for Communities [who is also the Director of Children's Services] and including the CEO of the partner organisation or appropriate senior manager. This board will have overall responsibility for ensuring that the partnership envisaged by the development of the Permanency Service delivers

the outcomes required of it for the vulnerable children and young people of Peterborough, while continuing to find ways to innovate and deliver value for money.

Joint working between the new service and the Council at all levels will be essential if these proposals are to be successful. It is therefore likely that there will be a joint operational management board that will oversee day to day activities, which will include at least one senior officer from the Local Authority.

These governance arrangements are also likely to form the basis of an escalation policy, enabling matters of disagreement to be resolved.

The Permanency Service will also be accountable to scrutiny by the Corporate Parenting Panel and relevant Council Scrutiny committees.

The Council will require a 'walk-in' clause within the contract, enabling it to take control of the service in the event that serious failings in the quality of service delivery emerge.

Expected Characteristics of a Successful Partner

We are seeking a single partner organisation to operate the above functions. While we will consider applications from a consortium, our view is that a single partner will deliver a more streamlined service, with fewer hand-offs and a reduced likelihood of any delays in service delivery.

The issue of avoiding delay is of particular importance in that research indicates that adoption and permanency outcomes are more likely to be maximised where decisions are made quickly and children placed with permanent carers as early in their journeys as possible.

Any consortium bid would need to clearly evidence how it would mitigate the above concerns about delays in the journey of the child from care to permanent outcomes, including through adoption.

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.

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.

Concluding Remarks

This is a draft summary of the final service specification. It is intended to enable interested parties to gain a clear understanding of the vision associated with the proposal to develop a Permanency Service in Peterborough, namely to improve outcomes for children and young people through the development of innovative models of delivery that also lead to better value for money.

The soft market testing will give interested parties the opportunity to discuss the draft specification in more detail and to provide input to the proposals in advance of completion of the final specification.

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