

<b>CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE</b>	<b>AGENDA ITEM No. 8</b>
<b>17 MARCH 2021</b>	<b>PUBLIC REPORT</b>

Report of: Wendi Ogle-Welbourn	Wendi Ogle-Welbourn Executive Director People and Communities	
Cabinet Member(s) responsible: Lynne Ayres	Lynne Ayres Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education, Skills and the University	
Contact Officer(s):	Fiona Van Den Hout Head of Service Fostering and Supervised Contact	Tel. 01223 518739

## **REPORT TO CONFIRM NEW REGIONAL ADOPTION AGENCY AND FOSTERING STRUCTURES**

<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	
<b>FROM:</b> Nicola Curley, Assistant Director Children's Services	<b>Deadline date:</b> N/A
It is recommended that Corporate Parenting Committee:	
1. Note the detail of the report and raise any questions with Lead Officers	

### **1. ORIGIN OF REPORT**

1.1 This report has been requested by the Corporate Parenting Committee.

### **2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT**

2.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Committee Members with an update on the new arrangements for delivering adoption and fostering services for Peterborough and Cambridgeshire Councils.

2.2 This report is for Corporate Parenting Committee to consider under its Terms of Reference No. 4.4.3.3 Ensure that the needs of looked after children and care leavers are addressed through key plans, policies and strategies throughout the Council overseeing interagency working arrangements.

2.3 This reports to the Children in Care Pledge by focussing on respect for children in care and care leavers.

### **3. TIMESCALES**

Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan?	<b>NO</b>	If yes, date for Cabinet meeting	N/A
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### **4. BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES**

4.1 **Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fostering Services**

4.1.1 The delivery model for fostering services in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough has changed with the launch of an exciting new Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fostering Service on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2020. The new service enables us to combine some activity which opens up the possibility for us to do more, such as training for foster carers but also to improve quality of, and build resilience in, our fostering services all of which will benefit those who really matter – our children and young people.

4.1.2 The design of the new service offer brings together the experience from both previous services, and with our new shared strategic priorities, we have developed the most flexible and best possible service we can.

Our priorities for the Fostering Service are:

- Invest in our foster carers
- Improve our support and training offer
- Build better relationships and a more consistent partnership working ethos
- Ensure that there is a consistent focus on safeguarding
- Recruit more carers.

4.1.3 The changes to the previous separate services can be broadly defined into the two main points below:

- Some aspects of how we deliver fostering services were brought into teams operating across the two authorities. These teams are now located within the Recruitment and Assessment function of the service and the Quality Assurance function.
- The core roles and functions of our fostering services have remained separate, for example Cambridgeshire staff supervise Cambridgeshire foster carers, and Peterborough staff supervise Peterborough carers.

#### 4.2 **Recruitment and Assessment:**

4.2.1 This service area now acts as the shared 'front door' for all fostering enquiries for both Peterborough and Cambridgeshire and the assessment of prospective Foster Carers and Special Guardians.

4.2.2 This service area is also responsible for running innovative and effective multimedia marketing campaigns and all our generic communication with foster carers, pre and post approval. There are three Recruitment and Assessment Teams within this area and a Marketing and Recruitment function with recently introduced Recruitment Officers who support the service to maximise on all fostering enquiries and support prospective carers through to assessment.

#### 4.3 **Supervision and Support:**

4.3.1 This service area supports and supervises all approved foster carers for Peterborough and Cambridgeshire of all types (mainstream, link, connected carers and private fostering carers). Each carer is allocated a Fostering Social Worker who is responsible for ensuring the quality of care the foster carer provides to the children they look after and that the foster carer has access to all the necessary support to meet their responsibilities.

4.3.2 There are three teams within this area, two teams of Cambridgeshire Social Workers supporting Cambridgeshire's Foster Carers and one team of Peterborough Social Workers supporting Peterborough's Foster Carers.

4.3.3 We have successfully recruited to all our three dedicated Placement Officer posts attached to these teams whose main responsibility it is broker all in-house care arrangements to ensure children move to live with the right foster carer and that we maximise the use of our in-house resources. Placement Officers are also responsible for managing the relationship between the Foster Carer, the fostering and child's Social workers to ensure the best possible start to all fostering arrangements.

#### 4.4 **Quality Assurance:**

- 4.4.1 This service area consists of one team and is responsible for the overall quality and standard of care provided to children. It is a new dedicated function in both authorities which will also be responsible for undertaking Foster Carer Annual Reviews and Standards of Care Investigations. This provides an independent mechanism and the opportunity for better reflective practice, support and challenge to both Foster Carers and Social Workers. Also within this area are the dedicated training roles who deliver training and preparation for prospective Foster Carers as well as carers who have been already approved.
- 4.4.2 We have also introduced and successfully recruited a dedicated Panel Advisor who is responsible for panel arrangements and Agency Decision Maker activity, ensuring the diversity of the Central List and how panels from each authority can support each other.
- 4.4.3 We have increased and successfully recruited to all vacant management posts across the service within two months of implementation. Each team is managed by a Team Manager, each service area by a Service Manager and a dedicated Head of Service working across both authorities has operational responsibility for the service. This increase in management oversight will help drive planned initiatives forward and improve practice and performance which ultimately will help us to realise our main aim: fostering services in both authorities being amongst the highest performing in the country.

#### 4.5 **Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Regional Adoption Agency**

- 4.5.1 The delivery model for adoption services in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough has also changed with the launch of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Regional Adoption Agency on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2020. The journey to implementation had been subject to some changes in direction but the Department for Education supported us to develop a Local Authority hosted Regional Adoption Agency. This model will maintain close links with children's services and fostering services in each authority and increase the potential pool of adopters so that we are in the best position to secure adoption for those children for whom adoption is in their best interests.

The aims of the service are to:

- 4.5.2
- Have a key role in the early permanency planning agenda within both Peterborough and in Cambridgeshire and be instrumental in the care planning for children who have a plan for adoption
  - Recruit adopters who can meet the needs of the children with adoption plans (specifically older children, sibling groups and children with additional vulnerabilities)
  - Offer high quality support to adopters, birth parents and carers and all parties involved with the child
  - Ensure a culture of continuous challenge, innovation and improvement
  - Provide an accessible service to all parties affected by adoption and special guardianship (adopters, adoptees, birth families, foster carers, guardians and children in their care)
  - Develop a coherent and robust 'Local Offer' that provides the right support, at the right time to Adopters and Special Guardians

- 4.5.3 In order to minimise disruption, the Regional Adoption Agency has been designed to align with Cambridgeshire's previous adoption structure (the host authority) which provided a structure which could be scaled up. The Regional Adoption Agency consists of four distinct teams dedicated to delivering key focussed activity.

#### 4.6 **Recruitment and Assessment:**

- 4.6.1 This service area recruits, assesses and supports prospective adopters to meet the needs of children waiting to be placed for adoption in each authority in line with their developed recruitment and marketing plan. In addition, the service undertakes annual reviews as required, assesses and support parents or partners and family relatives who wish to adopt a child on a non-agency basis and foster carers who are seeking to adopt the child in their care. As in Fostering, a Recruitment Offer will support this team.

#### **4.7 Family Finding:**

4.7.1 This part of the service takes lead responsibility for all aspects of the linking and matching of children with adopters. The service also provides support and advice to the children's Social Workers about the adoption process, coordinates other family finding activities and crucially increases the opportunities for children to be adopted who are older, have additional vulnerabilities or within sibling groups. Tracking children with a potential or actual adoption plan and reporting on adoption timescales against national and local indicators also takes place within this part of the service.

#### **4.8 Adoption and Special Guardianship Support:**

4.8.1 This service area undertakes assessments of Adopter and Special Guardian support needs or commissions these if required, undertaking applications to the Adoption Support Fund for children. Additional activity this area is also responsible for includes social events for children and young people, social/training events for adoptive parents, advice and signposting for adoptive families, independent support and advice to birth relatives, counselling and information to adopted adults post 18 years and independent support to birth parents including a letter box exchange service.

#### **4.9 Panel and Quality Assurance:**

4.9.1 This service area administers and supports Adoption Panels which recommend the approval of prospective adopters and matches between children and adopters. It also provides professional advice on best practice and regulations to the Agency Decision Makers within both Peterborough and Cambridgeshire. As in our fostering services, the Agency Advisor plays a key role in maintaining a high standard of practice and performance through the quality assurance of all services areas within the Regional Adoption Agency.

4.9.2 We have not yet successfully recruited to all management posts within the Regional Adoption Agency. The Delivery Lead is a crucial post that will drive through new innovations and help to shape how adoption services are delivered into the future. However, both Cambridgeshire and Peterborough's adoption services had been providing a Good' service so the foundations of an outstanding service are already in place and achievable.

4.9.3 Both the new fostering and adoption services are being led by a dedicated Assistant Director for Fostering, Adoption and Specialist Young People's Services providing leadership and focus to the newly developing services. I would like to take the opportunity to welcome Ricky Cooper who joined the Senior Leadership Team on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2021.

### **5. CONSULTATION**

5.1 Consultations with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough staff across both fostering and adoption services were launched on 29 September 2020 and ended on 28 October 2020.

5.2 A further consultation including both Fostering Services and the Regional Adoption Agency will be launched towards the end of March 2021.

### **6. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OR IMPACT**

6.1 It is anticipated that new models of service delivery across both fostering and adoption will have a positive impact on the recruitment and assessment of, and support to, foster carers and adopters which will improve the lived experience of children and young people in care.

### **7. REASON FOR THE RECOMMENDATION**

7.1 There are no recommendations made within this report

**8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

8.1 None

**9. IMPLICATIONS**

**9.1 Financial Implications**

9.2 There are no financial implications.

**9.3 Legal Implications**

9.4 None

**9.5 Equalities Implications**

9.6 This report relates to the services provided for children in care and care leavers and ties into the Pledge and Charter that the local authority Respects the differing wants and needs for all.

**9.7 Carbon Impact Assessment**

This is not a policy/decision; it is a report for committee

**10. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

10.1 None

**11. APPENDICES**

11.1 None

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