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# NOTICE OF MEETING

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## CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

THURSDAY, 13 JULY 2017 AT 3.30 PM

## CONFERENCE ROOM A - SECOND FLOOR, CIVIC OFFICES

Telephone enquiries to Lisa Gallacher 02392 834056

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If any member of the public wishing to attend the meeting has access requirements, please notify the contact named above.

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## CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Councillor Ryan Brent (Conservative)

### Group Spokespersons

Councillor Rob Wood, Liberal Democrat

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(NB This Agenda should be retained for future reference with the minutes of this meeting.)

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**Deputations by members of the public may be made on any item where a decision is going to be taken. The request should be made in writing to the contact officer (above) by 12 noon of the working day before the meeting, and must include the purpose of the deputation (for example, for or against the recommendations). Email requests are accepted.**

## AGENDA

- 1 Apologies for absence
- 2 Declarations of interest
- 3 Children and Families Budget Outturn (Pages 3 - 10)

### Purpose of report

To inform the Cabinet Member of the revenue expenditure position within the portfolio cash limit for the financial year 2016-17. This report sets out the budget position and contributing factors to the final portfolio overspend at the end of the financial year; together with details of the initial financial projection

for 2017-18

**RECOMMENDED that the Cabinet Member:**

- (1) Notes the portfolio financial outturn position for 2016-17 of £0.335m in excess of the approved cash limit provision.**
- (2) Notes the current expectation that overspends represent a first call against the following year cash limit allocation. The overspend for 2016-17 has been accepted against corporate contingencies; given the actions that have been undertaken and continue to be developed to mitigate future overspending.**
- (3) Notes the ongoing budget pressures within the portfolio, as highlighted within the report, together with the need for continued action to reduce the service expenditure so that it can operate within its authorised cash limit for 2017- 18.**

**4 Bi-annual adoption report (Pages 11 - 18) (information item)**

Purpose

The Cabinet Member is asked to note the progression of the Regional Adoption Agency and the performance of the Portsmouth Adoption Agency in terms of:

- (a) Reducing waiting times for children being placed in permanent families.
- (b) Sustained number of children adopted in contrast to the national picture

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<b>Decision maker:</b>	<b>Cabinet Member for Children and Families</b>
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Budget Monitoring Outturn Report for 2016-17</b>
<b>Date of decision:</b>	<b>13<sup>th</sup> July 2017</b>
<b>Report from:</b>	<b>Chris Ward, Director of Finance and s.151 Officer</b>
<b>Report by:</b>	<b>Richard Webb, Finance Manager</b>
<b>Wards affected:</b>	<b>All</b>
<b>Key decision:</b>	No
<b>Budget &amp; policy framework decision:</b>	No

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## **1. Purpose of report**

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to inform the Cabinet Member of the revenue expenditure position within the portfolio cash limit for the financial year 2016-17. This report sets out the budget position and contributing factors to the final portfolio overspend at the end of the financial year; together with details of the initial financial projection for 2017-18

## **2. Summary**

- 2.1. Following overspend positions in the previous two years, and an initial projected financial pressure of around £1.2m on the budget for this year, the portfolio finished 2016-17 with an overspend of some £0.3m.
- 2.2. The previous monitoring reports have indicated an ongoing overspend position throughout the year, at times forecast at around £1m. Despite increasing levels of placement costs, the work to reduce spending and recover income in other areas to mitigate against this have had an impact; although the majority of mitigating factors are one-off items for 2016-17.
- 2.3. Despite this improved financial position, in comparison with previous years, there remain significant underlying pressures for which strategies and plans are being developed and implemented.

### **3 Recommendations**

#### **3.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet Member:**

- 3.1.1 Notes the portfolio financial outturn position for 2016-17 of £0.335m in excess of the approved cash limit provision.**
- 3.1.2 Notes the current expectation that overspends represent a first call against the following year cash limit allocation. The overspend for 2016-17 has been accepted against corporate contingencies; given the actions that have been undertaken and continue to be developed to mitigate future overspending.**
- 3.1.3 Notes the ongoing budget pressures within the portfolio, as highlighted within the report, together with the need for continued action to reduce the service expenditure so that it can operate within its authorised cash limit for 2017- 18.**

### **4 Background**

- 4.1 At the commencement of 2016-17 the portfolio was created containing the budget areas pertaining to Children's Social Care & Safeguarding, Troubled Families and Early Years & Children's Centres.**
- 4.2 Expenditure on Children's Social Care and Safeguarding was subject to much scrutiny during 2014-15 and 2015-16; exceeding the budget provision for each year as it did. Under the approved financial arrangements, an overspend is carried forward by the portfolio into the following financial year, as portfolio's are now expected to manage their financial resources across financial years in order to encourage medium term operational and financial planning. However overspends from prior years had been subsumed corporately to provide a clean starting point for the new portfolio.**

### **5 Summary Position against Cash Limited Budget at the end of 2016-17**

- 5.1 The portfolio had a year-end net spend of £24.308m producing an overspend of £0.335m as identified in the table below, with Children's Social Care and Safeguarding service overspend of £0.545m being partially offset by an underspend of £0.211m in the Early Year's and Children's Centres service.**

**Table 1**

	Final Cash Limit £	Actual Expenditure £	Variation £
<i>Assessment &amp; Intervention</i>	4,141,880	3,675,599	(466,281)
<i>Looked After Children</i>	14,879,670	16,291,634	1,411,964
<i>Safeguarding &amp; Monitoring</i>	3,137,550	2,848,345	(289,205)
<i>Support Activities</i>	1,131,400	1,020,470	(110,930)
Children's Social Care And Safeguarding	23,290,500	23,836,048	545,548
Troubled Families	225,900	225,901	1
Early Years & Children's Centres	456,930	246,081	(210,849)
<b>TOTAL PORTFOLIO</b>	<b>23,973,330</b>	<b>24,308,030</b>	<b>334,700</b>

- 5.2 Troubled Families had a cash limit allocation of £226,000 and this was supplemented by significant income and grant funding of £820,000 used to meet the 2016-17 spending of £1.046m. The majority of this spending (£0.823m) related to service delivery through contracts and partner organisations.
- 5.3 Early Years and Children's Centres were funded by a combination of Public Health funding £1.367m and a cash limit allocation of £0.457m, providing an overall budget of £1.824m. Actual expenditure amounted to £1.613m, fully utilising the Public Health funding and producing a net underspend of £0.211m.
- 5.4 The underspend of £0.211m arose mainly through staff turnover and the holding of posts vacant, particularly in light of the intended service reviews. Staffing salaries were underspent by £104,000 over the year with further spending reductions in training and development expenditure of £53,000. Despite this state of flux and the reduction in staffing levels, income from traded services exceeded budget expectations by some £26,000 with general operating expenditure coming in some £28,000 below budget.

## 6 Children's Social Care and Safeguarding Analysis

- 6.1 The Children's Social Care and Safeguarding budget is the major component of the Portfolio budget and overspent by £0.545m. As identified in Table 1, this was the result of a significant overspend in respect of Looked After Children being offset by savings elsewhere within the service.
- 6.2 Analysing the variance by expenditure category across the service also demonstrates the impact of placement costs and the significant level of savings made during the year to help offset this level of spend.

**Table 2**

	£000
Staffing Establishment	-633
Placements	1,606
Operational	-428
<b>Total Budget Variation</b>	<b>545</b>

The position shown in Table 1 is further explained below.

### 6.3. Assessment and Intervention Service (£466,000 under spend):

- 6.3.1. Staffing turnover and the holding of vacancy levels meant staffing costs for the year were some £448,000 below budget, with some offsetting agency payments of only £16,000 being made at the beginning of the year.
- 6.3.2. Preventative spend in providing assistance to those with no recourse to public funds or children in need (under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989), exceeded the available budget provision by £35,000. Reduced secure accommodation and remand arrangements related to Youth Justice arrangements delivered further budgetary savings of £82,000, whilst other various operational costs exceeded available budget by a combined total of only £13,000.

### 6.4. Looked After Children (LAC) (£1,412,000 over spend):

- 6.4.1. This overspend position is the result of the growing demand for and increased cost of placements and particularly external residential placements for adolescent children; resulting in an over spend of £1.6m, as shown below.

Table 2

Placement Type	Budget			Outturn 2016/17			
	Average	Av Unit	Budget	Average	Av Unit	Final	Variance
	Nos	Cost	£	Nos	£	£	
External Residential	9.02	116,031	1,046,600	13.19	150,398	1,983,752	937,152
Semi Ex-Residential	2.42	23,967	58,000	0	23,967	0	-58,000
Independent Fostering Agency (IFA)	49.29	44,293	2,183,200	39.62	44,759	1,773,359	-409,841
Secure Welfare			57,000			142,429	85,429
In-House Fostercare	193.95	21,055	4,083,700	206.25	23,253	4,795,853	712,153
Adoption	44.41	7,881	350,000	63.92	8,370	535,033	185,033
Residence	38.92	4,625	180,000	20.42	4,834	98,699	-81,301
Special Guardianship	101.29	5,809	588,400	131	6,289	823,865	235,465
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>8,546,900</b>			<b>10,152,990</b>	<b>1,606,090</b>

*The table above includes roundings*

- 6.4.2. The placement table excludes Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) placements where government funding is provided. Expenditure on these placements, which continued to grow throughout the year, amounted to just over £1m. Government funding is intended to meet placement costs and contribute towards other overhead costs. However funding is only provided where the Home Office accept the asylum status; and there were 17 placements at the end of the year yet to receive Home Office agreement. As a consequence the income level of £960,000 was below the level of spend incurred, leaving an overspend of £108,000 for the year - albeit with a possible £102,000 to be recovered early in 2017-18.
- 6.4.3. Care Leaver Accommodation and allowances have historically been a source of budget pressure, however the budget was increased by £100,000 for 2016-17 and expenditure was £51,000 below this amended budget following savings in contractual arrangements.

- 6.4.4. Operational costs of our own children's homes exceeded the budget by £144,000 resulting from an inability to achieve income expectations, together with increased staffing costs arising from low staff turnover and sickness cover.
- 6.4.5. Adoption costs were some £202,000 below expectations, following delays through the court process in linking adopters and children. This is likely to present as an additional pressure in 2017-18.
- 6.4.6. Overall staffing and operating costs for the social work teams working in this area of the service delivered budget savings of £194,000, largely as a reflection of recruitment delays linked with staff turnover.
- 6.5. **Safeguarding & Monitoring** (£289,000 under spend):
- 6.5.1. Support for children with disabilities presented an underspend of £176,000 following the delay and cessation of high cost support plans, recovery of unused direct payment funding, provision through alternative sources together with reduced demand for and improved recycling of high cost specialist equipment. Staff vacancies and turnover, after providing for cover arrangements, delivered savings of £29,000 with a further £84,000 arising from improved operational arrangements and reduced contractor payments.
- 6.6. **Support Activities** (£111,000 under spend):
- 6.6.1. Delays in staff training coupled with training income delivered savings of £62,000 against the budget provision, with reduced legal fees contributing a further £44,000.

## 7 2017-18 Financial Projection

- 7.1 Children's Social Care in Portsmouth continues to demonstrate good performance across key indicators in comparison with statistical neighbours. Previous financial benchmarking has also indicated that the cost of the service is low to average adding to the difficulty in identifying any substantial savings.
- 7.2 During 2016-17, the Children's Social Care and Safeguarding service reduced the over spend to £0.545m; the lowest it has been in the last four years, as shown in the table below.

Year	Budget	Spend	Deficit £	Deficit %
<b>2013/14</b>	22,989,200	25,283,275	2,294,075	9.98%
<b>2014/15</b>	22,814,517	26,670,402	3,855,885	16.90%
<b>2015/16</b>	22,724,852	24,123,104	1,398,252	6.15%
<b>2016/17</b>	23,290,500	23,836,048	545,548	2.32%

7.3 Despite the improved financial position in comparison with previous years, there remain significant underlying pressures which present significant challenges for the service; for which strategies and plans are being developed and implemented. The specific challenges include:

- ongoing placement pressures in terms of numbers and cost
- increasing demand for statutory intervention from children's social care,
- increasing numbers of unaccompanied asylum seekers
- reduced internal residential provision
- increasing expectations from external bodies

7.4 For 2017-18, the initial financial projection for the Children's & Families Portfolio is an over spend of £1.7m mainly due to the cost of placements; £1.3 million being attributable to the cost of external residential placements, as shown in the table below. Other pressures amounting to £0.450m are expected to be offset by other mitigating factors. The financial placement projection is based on the current children in placement in April 2017 and assumes that they will continue in their current placement until the end of the financial year; unless a placement end date is available. This projection is expected to change as children leave and enter placements throughout the financial year.

	FTE Nos	Annual Average Forecast Placement Costs	Total Forecast Expenditure 2017/18	Budget Available 2017/18	Potential Underlying Deficit
<b>Placements</b>					
In-House					
Foster Care	206	23,523	4,845,738	4,397,250	448,488
IFAs	32.43	44,871	1,455,152	1,941,000	-485,848
Adoption	64	8,371	535,744	1,118,400	337,883
ROs	20	4,834	96,680		
SGOs	131	6,289	823,859		
					<b>300,523</b>
External residential	16.02	163,560	2,620,229	1,237,100	1,383,129
			<b>10,377,402</b>	<b>8,693,750</b>	<b>1,683,652</b>



- 7.5 In recognition of the ongoing and growing budget pressures the service continues to review and develop strategies to reduce ongoing spending which include:
- Reducing reliance on agency staff via workforce development
  - Reducing interim care days prior to permanent care placement
  - Means testing and time limiting allowance payments
  - Creation of a Regional Adoption Agency in partnership with other Authorities
  - Maintenance of good in-house fostering service, minimising IFA usage
  - System transformation designed to better target early help and reduce demand
- 7.6 These strategies are already beginning to deliver some results with no reliance being placed on agency social workers in 2016-17, an average reduction of 69 days between entering care and introduction of permanent care arrangements, and a low reliance on residential and Independent Foster Care arrangements.
- 7.7 On the 29<sup>th</sup> June, the Director of Children's Services presented a report to Cabinet regarding the Resilience in Children's Social Care. The proposals contained within this report sought to increase social work capacity by increasing both the number of Social Workers by eight and Service Leaders by three.
- 7.8 As highlighted within that report, it is intended that this investment in resources will enable better social work decisions and more timely responses to be made with lower case-loads and robust management oversight. As a consequence, it is anticipated that this would lead to a reduction in both the current cost of placements as well as help to mitigate future high cost placements.

## **8 Equality impact assessment (EIA)**

- 8.1 An equality impact assessment is not required as the recommendations do not have a negative impact on any of the protected characteristics as described in the Equality Act 2010. There is no change to policy or service and through the budget review process equality impact assessments would be undertaken on an individual basis as required.

## **9 Legal comments**

- 9.1 There are no legal implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report.

## **10 Finance comments**

- 10.1 As stated within the report, the portfolio was projected to overspend throughout the 2016-17 financial year. There is also recognition of the work and developing strategies that the service is undertaking. This has seen the projected overspend fall from an initial forecast of £1.2m to £1.0m at the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter, to a final outturn of £0.545m. In light of the actions that have been undertaken, and continue to be developed, to mitigate future overspending the 2016-17 overspend has been accepted against corporate contingencies for that year.

- 10.2 The financial outturn for 2016-17 is comprised of both one-off expenditure items and some recurring items. As a result of this, it is expected that based on the information available, that going into 2017-18 the service could be facing a financial pressure in the region £1.7m.
- 10.3 As noted within the report, the Director of Children's Services has proposed to increase social work capacity by increasing both the number of Social Workers by eight and Service Leaders by three. It is intended that the investment in additional resources will enable better social work decisions and more timely responses to be made with lower case-loads and robust management oversight. As a consequence, it is anticipated that this would lead to a reduction in both the current cost of placements as well as help to mitigate future high cost placements
- 10.4 Whilst it is anticipated that the proposed strategy will lead to a reduction in the cost of placements, it may take some time for the changes to embed and have a visible impact on the projected overspend. The intention is that the investment in staffing of £462,000 will be funded from the anticipated reduction in placement costs. However, there is inevitably a risk that the costs will not be fully offset by the reduction in placement costs in year 1, and that the projected overspend for 2017/2018 may increase.
- 10.5 The financial position of the Portfolio will be monitored and reported regularly to both the management team and the Cabinet Member during the financial year to enable corrective action to be taken where possible.

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**Chris Ward, Director of Finance and s.151 Officer**

**Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972**

The information upon which this report has been based has been drawn from a variety of sources; however much of the information used is held in budget files prepared by the Children and Education Finance Team. Please contact Richard Webb, Finance Manager, if required.

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by the Cabinet on

.....  
Signed by: Cabinet Member



**Title of meeting:** Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care

**Subject:** Annual Adoption Panel Activity Report March 2017

**Date of meeting:** 13 July 2017

**Report by:** Sarah Newman - Deputy Director of Children's Services, Children's Social Care

**Wards affected:** None

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## 1. Requested by:

- 1.1. It is required by Standard 25.6 of the Adoption National Minimum Standards 2011 for Local Authority Adoption Services that the executive receives a six-monthly written report outlining the management and performance of the adoption agency.

The Cabinet Member is asked to note the progression of the Regional Adoption Agency and the performance of the Portsmouth Adoption Agency in terms of:

- (a) Reducing waiting times for children being placed in permanent families.
- (b) Sustained number of children adopted in contrast to the national picture

## 2. Purpose

- 2.1. The previous report prepared September 2016. This report will update the Lead Member on Portsmouth Adoption Agency's end of year activity and ongoing development in accordance with the government's Adoption Reform Programme introduced in 2012. This report includes the independent Portsmouth Adoption Panel annual report written by the panel chair (appendix 3).

## 3. Background

- 3.1. Practices in adoption continue to receive government attention to promote stable, permanent care arrangements for children unable to be cared for by their birth families. In the DfE paper 'Adoption - A Vision For Change' the government outlined expectations for improved practices through regionalised agencies.

Grants have been made available for local authorities to develop these agencies and Portsmouth, Southampton, Isle of Wight and Hampshire are working with the voluntary sector to develop a regional adoption agency (RAA) - Adoption South Central. The proposed date for the RAA to go live is April 2018.

## 4. Areas that are doing well

- 4.1. The number of Looked After Children leaving care through adoption has continued to increase in accordance with government led timescales (appendix 2). Nationally there has been a reduction in the number of adoptive families recruited, and whilst Portsmouth has also experienced a reduction, the majority of our children have been placed with Portsmouth approved adopters. The outcome of which is those adoptive families and

children already have established working relationships within the Portsmouth Adoption Service, enabling early targeted adoption support to these families. A common theme for Portsmouth approved adopter feedback is we are welcoming, accessible and we know the children and adopters well and all able to promptly provide support.

- 4.2. Children needing adoptive families have complex needs and Portsmouth is committed to identifying the most suitable families for those children. This year we have successfully placed a very young child with extensive health needs, two older children with learning disabilities and children over the age of six with behavioural issues having experienced chronic neglect and birth histories of substance misuse.
- 4.3. Children's family finding social workers work closely with our regional partners and nationally with adoption agencies to identify the diversity of families needed for our children for where there is not a local match. Family finding costs have been mitigated with the government's introduction of the Inter-Agency Fee Fund July 2015 - November 2016 for children with a range of complex needs.
- 4.4. Portsmouth's timeliness for children being adopted has continued to improve from 541 days in March 2016 (average over three years) to 493 in March 2017 - a total of 94 children have been adopted over the past three years. Learning from the four placements that disrupted in the previous two years has meant improved practice in assessment and matching. This year there have been no placement disruptions.
- 4.5. Portsmouth has responded positively to the government initiative to provide early permanence for some children through Fostering for Adoption (FfA). FfA is suitable for children at high risk of needing an adoptive family and is agreed as a suitable plan with birth parents and the court.
- 4.6. The advantages of FfA is the minimum disruption for children whilst care proceedings are concluded. For 2016/17 four children were placed initial approved adoptive families under Fostering Regulations and then placed for adoption. FfA can reduce the time the child spends in care - for example one child was placed under four weeks old and adopted at four months old.
- 4.7. The Adoption Support Service continues to develop in order to provide comprehensive support packages. Following family referrals the service completed 45 Adoption Support Needs Assessments (ASNAs) leading to support packages being provided. Common themes for adoptive families are children's issues with identity; managing transitions - particularly in school leading to risk of being excluded and child on parent violence.
- 4.8. The adoption support service supports families from the point of children being placed with them (if needed), but primarily from the making of an adoption order through to adulthood offering therapeutic parenting strategies, support with child on parent violence ,life story work as well as offering group workshops for specific issues related to adoption. The service has been boosted as 22 families have been able to access specialist therapeutic support through funding created by the Government's Adoption Support Fund (ASF) at a total cost of £127,545. The ASF has been particularly beneficial enabling external providers to support those families living outside Portsmouth.
- 4.9. The Adoption Service continues to learn and improve following feedback provided by adopted adults and birth parents. For example of the 47 referrals received for birth

records and intermediary work there was an increase in younger adults who were adopted, requesting their birth records. It is evident that adopted adults need to understand how and why decisions were made to separate them from birth family and that they have full and accurate information recorded in their adoption files pertaining to local authority and court decisions where they are separated from their siblings.

- 4.10. Similarly adoption birth parent counselling is an open offer to birth parents involved in care proceedings leading to their child being adopted. This year there have been 16 referrals. Many birth parents are not ready to access this service in parallel with or just after care proceedings and will access the service months or years later. They may also join the quarterly birth parent support group which comprises birth parents having relinquished children many years ago and birth parents having children removed from their care to adoption.
- 4.11. For those Portsmouth approved adopters who are not matched with our Portsmouth children they have the opportunity to be to be matched with other agency children. This year four Portsmouth families have been matched with a total of six other agency children. Similarly to the previous year, the majority of those children are from our regional partner agencies which demonstrates good working relationships are already being established as we move toward becoming a regionalised adoption agency.

## **5. Areas for consideration**

- 5.1. Portsmouth approved 21 adoptive families this year which in line with the national trend is a reduction in prospective adopters going forward. A recruitment strategy is in place this year to target potential families able to meet complex needs of our children. Portsmouth has an average of 40 children at any one time with a plan of adoption. Currently there are 11 children waiting to be matched to adoptive families. This includes siblings and children aged six plus.
- 5.2. The number of children with plans for adoption has reduced significantly this year in comparison to last year as has the number of placement orders granted by the court. (see appendix 1). Portsmouth continues to maintain a robust permanence tracking process to ensure children becoming Looked After have a clear, timely permanence plan appropriate to their needs. This may be placement with birth parents, special guardians, with extended family long term fostering or adoption. Permanence tracking will continue to monitor the number of children becoming Looked After to ensure early identification of those children needing permanence outside of birth families.
- 5.3. The adoption support service is available to an average total of 104 families each year which includes adoptive families transferring from other local authorities. The availability of the Adoption Support Fund has been invaluable to bolstering the support needs. Whilst there have been some restrictions newly implemented by the ASF criteria for applications, Portsmouth families to date have not been adversely affected by these. The challenge will be for the regional adoption agency to develop and sustain the improved adoption support services once the ASF ceases in 2020, within a static budget.
- 5.4. **Areas of development**
- 5.5. There was a Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) project team established to drive the development of Adoption South Central expected to go live in April 2018. Adoption South Central comprises Portsmouth, Hampshire, Isle of Wight; Southampton the voluntary adoption agencies (VAAs), Barnardos, Parents and Children Together (PACT) and Adoption UK. With the contributions from the VAAs the four local authorities will come

together to provide a regional agency specialising in the recruitment of adoptive families; expecting high quality family finding for the local authorities and offering comprehensive support for adoptive families.

5.6. The benefits of an RAA to Portsmouth will be:

- 5.6.1. The removal of local competitive recruitment for prospective adoptive families
- 5.6.2. Immediate access to a wider pool of adoptive families for Portsmouth children across the region
- 5.6.3. Adoptive placements more localised within the local regional area, promoting efficiency in adoption support
- 5.6.4. Adoptive families able to access robust comprehensive support packages to mitigate risk of disruption for children with complex needs.
- 5.6.5. Building on local authority good practice, skills and expertise to enable prospective adopters to be fully prepared and suitably matched and supported with those children placed - securing that child's future throughout their childhood and beyond.

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Signed by (Director)

**Appendices:**

Appendix 1 - Adoption activity 2011-17

Appendix 2 - Annual report by adoption panel chair March 2017

**Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972**

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location

Appendix 1

Table 1: Adoption activity 2011 – 2017

From	To	Adoption orders No. of children adopted	No. of children's plans for adoption agreed	Placement Orders granted	No. of children linked with adoptive family for adoption	No. of prospective adoptive families approved	Placements disrupted
2010	2011	14	21		15	11	0
2011	2012	16	42		13	18	0
2012	2013	13	30		26	20	0
2013	2014	27	41	30	35	37	0
2014	2015	34	29	27	31	32	2
2015	2016	25	41	41	28	22	2
2016	2017 *	35	21	19	31	21	0

Table 2: Placement type

From	To	PCC	OLA*	VAA*
2014	2015	14	6	11
2015	2016	22	2	4
2016	<b>2017</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>

\*Other local authority

\*Voluntary Adoption Agency

Portsmouth Team report March 2017  
National data A1 515 days

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

3yr average	Mar-16	Apr-16	May-16	Jun-16	Jul-16	Aug-16	Sep-16	Oct-16	Nov-16	Dec-16	Jan-17	Feb-17	Mar-17
A1	541	537	532	511	507	498	492	490	482	482	486	493	493

National Data A2 - 229

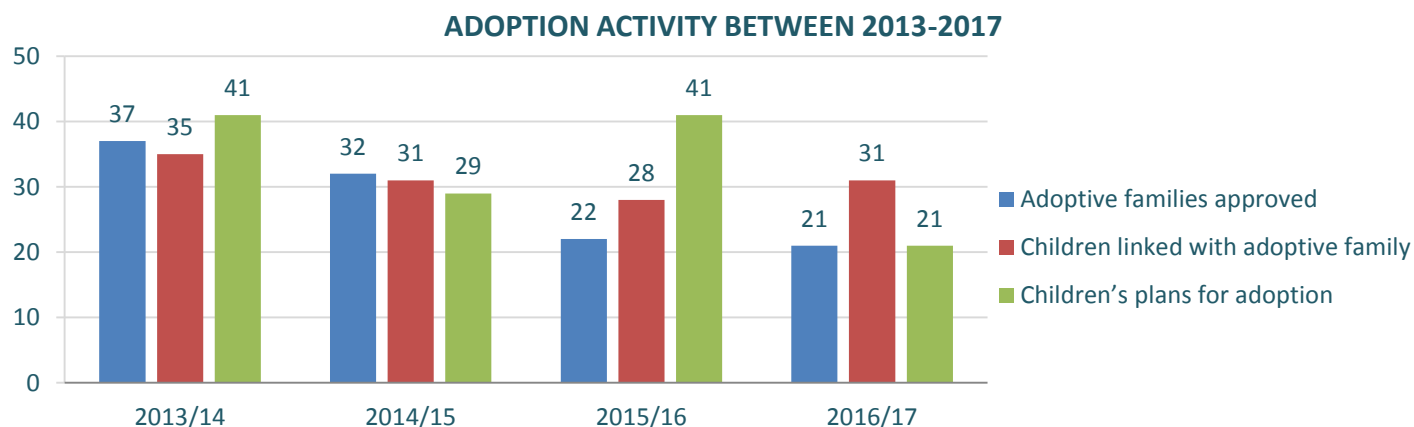
**A2: Average time between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family (days)**

3yr average	Mar-16	Apr-16	May-16	Jun-16	Jul-16	Aug-16	Sep-16	Oct-16	Nov-16	Dec-16	Jan-17	Feb-17	Mar-17
A2	251	251	252	243	244	240	235	235	230	230	236	239	241

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ADOPTION ACTIVITY BETWEEN 2013-2017



- As the table shows, panel activity in the last year has continued to decline for approval of prospective adopters and has increased slightly for children linked with adopters. The fall in adopter numbers reflects national and regional trends.
- Panels have a changing membership chosen from the central list consisting of twelve members .The central list consists of social workers;adopters;a medical adviser;the Chair and Vice Chair;a foster carer;an adopted person and a birth mother.
- All panel members are appraised each year by the Chair and Panel adviser,although our programme for these has been delayed by scheduling issues at panel as the appraisals are usually held after panel. All panel members remain very conscientious and committed to the Panel process and provide a rich blend of perspectives for consideration of any application.
- Panel continues to meet fortnightly but there have been a few cancelled panels during the year. We average around 21 panels per year.

- The Chair and Vice Chair attend the six monthly Adoption and Permanence Forum with senior Departmental Managers to discuss practice and performance issues.
  - The quality of the reports to panel remain of a good standard but it is clear that Government time scales for Prospective Adopter approval and for Children moving onto Adoption have had an impact on the preparation of paperwork for panel. The Chair and vice Chair have met with managers to discuss rationalising reports needed to reduce duplication.
  - The Agency has committed to updating reports to panel ensuring that we have the most up to date information for our recommendations to the Agency.
  - This year saw the introduction of Foster Carers attending panel (briefly) to give a short pen picture of their fostered child who is about to be linked with adopters . Panel members have really appreciated this development as it helps them have a fuller picture of the child being considered.
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- Panel had expressed concern earlier in the year about the brevity of introductions for children moving into adoptive placements. This appears to have improved, hopefully assisted by creative involvement of the Adoption Support team.
  - The Panel has benefitted from short presentations by Adoption team staff to brief us on changes in agency practice around issues such as adopters preparation and training and adoption support programme.
  - Finally, uncertainties continue surrounding the creation of the impending Regional Adoption Authority (RAA). The Chair recently attended an initial meeting with other adoption panel chairs in the Region to be briefed on developments and to explore possible models for future RAA panels which will operate from April 2018.

Mo O'Reilly  
 Chair of Adoption Panel  
 29.03.17