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# NOTICE OF MEETING

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## CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

FRIDAY, 6 JULY 2018 AT 4.30 PM

THE EXECUTIVE MEETING ROOM - THIRD FLOOR, THE GUILDHALL

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 Rob Wood (Liberal Democrat)

### Group Spokespersons

Councillor Ryan Brent, Conservative

Councillor Judith Smyth, Labour

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

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## AGENDA

- 1 **Apologies**
- 2 **Declaration of interests**
- 3 **Budget Monitoring Outturn Report for 2017-18 (Pages 3 - 12)**

### Purpose of report

To inform the Cabinet Member of the revenue expenditure position in respect of the portfolio cash limit and capital programme for the financial year 2017-18. This report sets out the budget position and contributing factors to the final portfolio cash limit overspend at the end of the year; together with an initial financial projection for 2018/19.

**RECOMMENDED that the Cabinet Member:**

- (1) Notes the Children and Families Portfolio financial outturn position for 2017/18 of £3.383m in excess of the approved cash limit position.**
- (2) Notes the current expectation that overspends represent a first call against the following year cash limit allocation.**
- (3) Notes the ongoing budget pressures within the portfolio, as highlighted in the report, and supports the ongoing process of budget review and realignment designed to reduce the projected overspend position within the area of Children's Social Care and Safeguarding.**
- (4) Notes that the capital programme spending is line with the approved capital budget.**

**4 Bi-annual adoption report (information only) (Pages 13 - 26)**

Purpose of report

The previous report was prepared October and presented December 2017. This report will update the Lead Member on Portsmouth Adoption Agency performance for the year April 1 2017 to 31 March 2018 and ongoing development in accordance with the Government's Adoption Reform Programme introduced in 2012.

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<b>Decision maker:</b>	<b>Cabinet Member for Children's and Families</b>
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Children and Families Portfolio Budget Monitoring Report for the Financial Year End 2017/18</b>
<b>Date of decision:</b>	<b>6th July 2018</b>
<b>Report from:</b>	<b>Chris Ward, Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer</b>
<b>Report by:</b>	<b>Bev Pennekett , 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. To inform the Cabinet Member of the revenue expenditure position in respect of the portfolio cash limit and capital programme for the financial year 2017-18. This report sets out the budget position and contributing factors to the final portfolio cash limit overspend at the end of the year; together with an initial financial projection for 2018/19.

## **2. Summary**

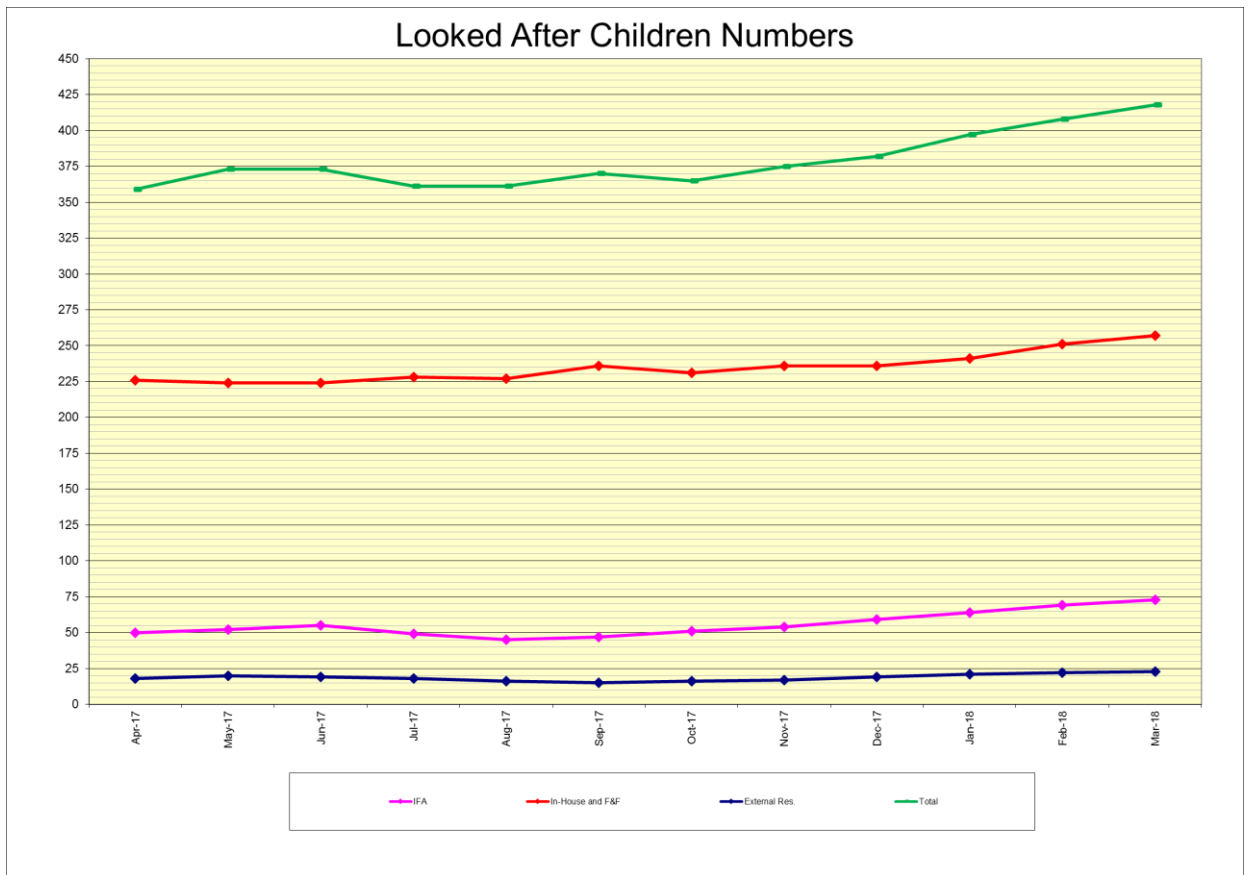
- 2.1. Following overspend positions in the previous three years, and an identified and growing financial pressure throughout 2017/18, the portfolio finished with a revenue overspend on its cash limit of £3.4m.
- 2.2. The substantial impact of increased placement requirements and costs, particularly in external residential requirements, has been identified in the financial monitoring reports during the year. These have been the key drivers of the overspend, and the identified ongoing pressure.
- 2.3. Other in-year pressures have generally been managed and offset by spending reductions elsewhere in the service, specifically staffing savings arising from turnover and recruitment difficulties
- 2.4. Whilst there were some delays within the capital programme, resulting in slippage of spending beyond 2017/18, the schemes are still expected to spend in line with the approved capital budgets.

### **3 Recommendations**

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet Member:
  - 3.1.1 Notes the Children and Families Portfolio financial outturn position for 2017/18 of £3.383m in excess of the approved cash limit position.
  - 3.1.2 Notes the current expectation that overspends represent a first call against the following year cash limit allocation.
  - 3.1.3 Notes the ongoing budget pressures within the portfolio, as highlighted in the report, and supports the ongoing process of budget review and realignment designed to reduce the projected overspend position within the area of Children's Social Care and Safeguarding.
  - 3.1.4 Notes that the capital programme spending is line with the approved capital budget.

### **4 Background**

- 4.1 At the commencement of 2016-17 the Children & Families 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 had been the subject of much scrutiny during 2014-15 and 2015-16; exceeding the budget provision for each year as it did, and overspent again in 2016-17, albeit at a reduced level of £0.5m.
- 4.3 Expenditure on Children's Social Care and Safeguarding was subject to much scrutiny during the last three years, exceeding the budget provision for each year as it did. Under the approved financial arrangements, an overspend is carried forward by the portfolio in the following financial year, as portfolios are now expected to manage their financial resources across financial years in order to encourage medium term operational and financial planning. However safeguarding overspends from prior years have been subsumed corporately to provide a clean starting point for the portfolio and in recognition of the mitigating work being undertaken.
- 4.4 In year monitoring during 2017/18 has identified the increasing budgetary pressures arising from the increasing placement requirements shown below.



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

5.1 The portfolio had a year-end net spend of £27.173m producing an overspend of £3.383m as identified in the table below, with the Children’s Social Care and Safeguarding service overspend of £3.572m being marginally offset by an underspend of £0.189m in the reformed Early Help and Prevention service.

Table 1

	Final Cash Limit £	Actual Expenditure £	Variation £
<i>Assessment &amp; Intervention</i>	4,056,500	3,791,231	(265,269)
<i>Looked After Children</i>	14,690,250	18,815,881	4,125,631
<i>Safeguarding &amp; Monitoring</i>	1,528,650	1,582,505	53,855
<i>Edge of Care Support Service</i>	439,700	223,490	(216,210)
<i>Support Activities</i>	2,844,300	2,717,974	(126,326)
Children's Social Care And Safeguarding	23,559,400	27,131,081	3,571,681
Troubled Families	-	2	2
Early Help and Prevention	230,660	41,827	(188,833)
<b>TOTAL PORTFOLIO</b>	<b>23,790,060</b>	<b>27,172,910</b>	<b>3,382,850</b>

- 5.2 Troubled Families is fully grant funded, with 2017/18 income of £715,000 enhanced by £589,951 from prior years. Of the 2017/18 grant, £471,000 was dependent on achieving a cumulative attachment of 1,444 families to the programme by the end of 2017/18. By year end 1,480 attachments had been made.
- 5.3 Expenditure of £645,176 was incurred during the year, £415,283 on externally commissioned services, resulting in a balance of £659,775 being rolled forward towards funding the service for a further year beyond the anticipated cessation of the grant in 2019/20.
- 5.4 At the beginning of 2017/18 the Early Help and Prevention Service was developed out of the previous Early Years and Children's Centres service. It is funded by a combination of Public Health funding of £1.367m and a cash limit allocation of £0.231m, providing an overall budget of £1.598m. Actual expenditure amounted to £1.409m, fully utilising the Public Health funding and producing a net underspend of £0.189m.
- 5.5 The underspend of £0.189m arose mainly through staff turnover and the holding of posts vacant, particularly in light of the service developments being introduced in the earlier part of the year. Staffing salaries were underspent by £133,000 over the year with grants and income contributing an additional £28,000, with a variety of operational spend savings delivering the remaining £28,000.

## 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 £3.572m. As identified in Table 1,
- 6.2 Analysing the variance by expenditure category across the service demonstrates that this overspend can be related to the impact of placement numbers and costs, whilst increased operational costs in other areas have broadly been offset by savings in staffing costs resulting from staffing turnover, vacancies and recruitment difficulties.

**Table 2**

	£000
Staffing Establishment	-611
Placements	3,558
Operational	625
<b>Total Budget Variation</b>	<b>3,572</b>

The position shown in Table 1 is further explained below.

### 6.3. Assessment and Intervention Service (£265,000 under spend):

- 6.3.1. Staffing turnover and vacancy levels meant staffing costs for the year were some £486,000 below budget, whilst the use of agency staffing involved offsetting payments of £128,000 being incurred during 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 £51,000. Other various operational costs (such as transport requirements, linguistic services, office expenses, etc) also exceeded available budget by a combined total of £42,000.

**6.4. Looked After Children (LAC) (£4,126,000 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 £3.558m, as shown below.

**Table 2**

Placement Type	Budget			Outturn 2017/18			
	Average	Av Unit	Budget	Average	Av Unit	Final	Variance
	Nos	£	£	Nos	£	£	
External Residential	9.02	137,151	1,237,100	21.96	171,992	3,776,284	2,539,184
Independent Fostering Agency (IFA)	37.86	39,379	1,491,000	32.46	50,457	1,637,760	146,760
In-House Fostercare	189.10	23,253	4,483,250	223.08	22,495	5,050,997	567,747
Adoption	41.81	8,371	350,000	63.83	8,489	541,909	191,909
Residence	37.24	4,834	180,000	16.00	4,715	75,437	-104,563
Special Guardianship	93.56	6,289	588,400	144.00	5,591	805,144	216,744
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>8,329,750</b>			<b>11,887,530</b>	<b>3,557,780</b>

*The table above includes roundings*

6.4.2. At the beginning of the year there was an anticipated placement pressure of £1.7m and the numbers and costs of placements continued to increase throughout the year leading to the eventual high level of overspend. This increase was particularly noticeable in the level of external residential placements where last year there were 13.19 [fte] such placements compared with 22.96 [fte] placements this year. There has been an increase in the number of cases where the child's safety requires such an "out of city" placement.

6.4.3. The placement table excludes Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Minors (UAM) placements where government funding is provided. Expenditure on these placements, which continued to grow throughout the year, amounted to £1.625m. Government funding is provided at a fixed rate [according to age] where the Home Office accept the asylum status and amounted to £1.503m, some £122,000 below the costs incurred. The grant income is intended to also contribute towards other service costs and the 2017/18 budget assumed a contribution of £146,000. This meant an overall shortfall for the year of £268,000.

6.4.4. Also excluded from the placement table are "Secure Welfare" placements. These placements are costly but tend to be infrequent and short term in nature, hence a relatively small budget provision of £60,000. Unfortunately 2017/18 saw 7 such placements at a total cost of £529,967 - some £470,000

in excess of the budget provision. At the end of the year there were 2 such placements in existence.

- 6.4.5. Spending requirements on supporting care leavers was £135,000 below the available budget following the transfer elsewhere in the service of expenditure relating to UAMs. This also provides an opportunity to review the budget provision for 2018/19.
  - 6.4.6. Operational costs of our own children's homes exceeded the budget by £52,000 resulting from an inability to achieve income expectations, together with increased staffing costs arising from low staff turnover and sickness cover.
  - 6.4.7. Adoption costs were some £144,000 above expectations. Of this, £105,000 resulted from an inability to achieve the budgeted level of income from other agencies using PCC approved adopters as a consequence of reduced numbers of available adopters.
  - 6.4.8. Overall staffing and operating costs for the social work teams working in this area of the service delivered budget savings of £231,000, largely as a reflection of recruitment delays linked with staff turnover.
- 6.5. **Safeguarding & Monitoring** (£54,000 over spend):
- 6.5.1. Support for children with disabilities presented an overspend of £109,000 following the increased requirements of high cost support plans. Staff vacancies and turnover, after providing for cover arrangements, delivered savings of £24,000 with a further £31,000 arising from improved operational arrangements and reduced contractor payments.
- 6.6. **Edge of Care Service** (£216,000 under spend)
- 6.6.1. Whilst welfare related secure placements exceeded budget provision, those secure accommodation and remand arrangements related to Youth Justice and supported by grant income delivered further budgetary savings of £68,000, which together with an unrequired provision of £107,000 for prior year spend gave an underspend of £175,000.
  - 6.6.2. Savings arising from staffing turnover and Youth Offending operational expenditure delivered a further budgetary saving of £41,000..
- 6.7. **Support Activities** (£126,000 under spend):
- 6.7.1. Delays in staff training arising from changing workforce requirements coupled with additional training income accompanying newly qualified social workers resulted in savings of £115,000 against the budget provision, with reduced information technology and legal costs contributing a further £44,000.



6.7.2. Staffing turnover and vacancies, together with reduced operational spend, delivered savings of £151,000 in the support service which was utilised to fund spending of £135,000 on agency support.

6.7.3. Participating in the development of a Regional Adoption Agency is expected to produce a saving to the City Council. This was anticipated in the budget but has yet to be delivered resulting in an over spend of £49,000. Current plans and timescales for the new arrangements means that the savings are unlikely to be realised until 2019/20.

## 7 Capital

7.1 Shown below is the approved capital programme, and payments made to the end of the financial year. Revised funding for all schemes was approved by Council on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2018.

Scheme	Current Approved Budget	Actual Spend to March 2018	Forecast Spend
	£	£	£
Adaptations to Foster Carer Properties	195,000	85,724	195,000
Children's Case Management Software Replacements	1,907,000	32,805	1,907,000
Tangier Road Children's Home	495,000	161,865	495,000
Beechside Children's Home	55,000	6,056	55,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,652,000</b>	<b>286,450</b>	<b>2,652,000</b>

7.2 Requests for adaptations to foster care properties to facilitate extended or additional foster care placements are considered on individual merits as the opportunity is identified. This means that the timescale for spend is unpredictable with any unused funding allocation being carried forward to ensuing years.

7.3 Despite the significant work undertaken on the competitive procurement process, the unanticipated delays in signing the software replacement contract resulted in limited expenditure in 2017/18. A provider has now been identified and work is underway to implement the new system by the end of the financial year 2018/19.

7.4 Works on both children's homes commenced in 2017/18 and were expected to be completed early in the 2018/19 financial year.

## 8 2018-19 Financial Projection

8.1 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.

8.2 During 2017-18, the Children's Social Care and Safeguarding service was faced with placement requirements that resulted in a significant increase in the portfolio overspend and reversing the reducing trend of recent years, as shown in the table below.

Year	Budget £	Spend £	Deficit £	Deficit %
2013/14	22,989,200	25,283,275	2,294,075	9.98%
2014/15	22,814,517	26,670,402	3,855,885	16.90%
2015/16	22,724,852	24,123,104	1,398,252	6.15%
2016/17	23,290,500	23,836,048	545,548	2.34%
2017/18	23,790,060	27,172,910	3,382,850	14.22%

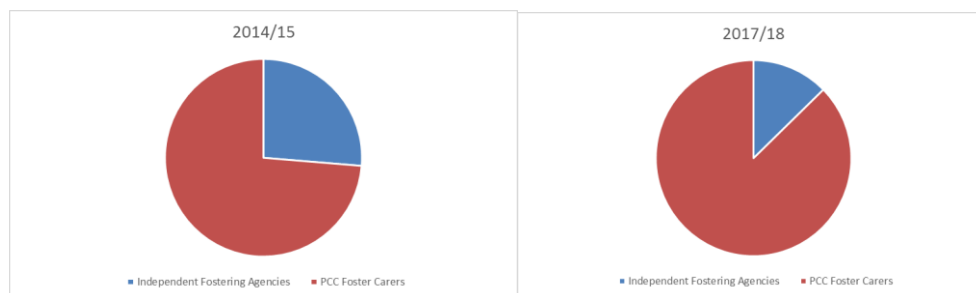
8.3 As reported throughout 2017/18 the overspend position has been growing and there remain significant underlying pressures which continue to present significant challenges for the service; for which strategies and plans are being developed and implemented. The specific challenges were identified at the end of last year, are still relevant and 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

8.4 For 2018-19, the initial financial projection for the Children's & Families Portfolio is an over spend of £4.2m mainly due to the cost of placements; £2.7 million being attributable to the cost of external residential placements, as shown in the table below. 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 2018/19	Budget Available 2018/19	Potential Underlying Deficit
<b>Placements:</b>					
In-House Fostercare	223	22,500	5,017,500	4,805,700	211,800
Independent Foster Agencies	37	52,500	1,942,500	1,442,000	500,500
Adoption	64	8,489	543,296	1,118,400	305,440
Residence Orders	16	4,715	75,440		
Special Guardianship Orders	144	5,591	805,104		
					<b>1,017,740</b>
External Residential	23	172,000	3,967,000	1,237,100	2,729,900
<b>Total</b>			<b>12,350,840</b>	<b>8,603,200</b>	<b>3,747,640</b>

- 8.5 Other pressures amounting to almost £0.5m reflect potential ongoing elements of 2017/18 issues such as secure placement requirements, income delivery issues, delay in Regional Adoption Agency savings and increased requirements for those with no access to public funds.
- 8.6 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
  - 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
  - Developing and implementing a restorative and reunification work ethos
  - Delivering "Edge of Care" support to reduce likelihood of care requirements
- 8.7 These strategies are already beginning to deliver some results, with a reduction in the number of days between entering care and introduction of permanent care arrangements, and improved proportion of foster placements delivered in-house, as shown in the chart below.



## 9 Summary

- 9.1 The portfolio revenue spend exceeded the available budget in 2017/18 and is projected to do the same in 2018/19. This can mainly be attributed to placement costs as described in section 5 of this report. Other pressure areas and delayed savings delivery have been broadly offset by in year savings, primarily from staffing turnover and vacancies.
- 9.2 Significant work has already been undertaken in the past to establish whether the Looked After Children and Safeguarding services more generally are costly or not, compared to our statistical neighbours. Establishing this provides a guide to the extent to which savings / efficiencies might be achievable. The evidence gathered to date indicates that the cost of Safeguarding, compared to our statistical neighbours, is low whilst performance is also comparatively low. Scope to make significant savings therefore, although possible, would appear limited.

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

10.1 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.

## **11 Legal comments**

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

## **12 Director of Finance comments**

12.1 Financial comments are contained within the body of the report.

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**Chris Ward, Director of Finance and Section 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 Beverley Pennekett, Finance Manager, if required.

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

.....  
Signed by: Cabinet Member

**THIS ITEM IS FOR INFORMATION ONLY.** (Please note that 'Information Only' reports do not require Equality Impact Assessments, Legal or Finance comments as no decision is being taken.)

**Title of meeting:** Cabinet member for Children and Families Services

**Subject:** Annual Adoption Panel Activity Report April 2018

**Date of meeting:** 06 July 2018

**Report by:** Jackie Clark, Service Leader, Adoption

**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.
- 1.2. The Lead Member is asked to note 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.
  - (c) The Adoption Panel annual report by Maura O'Reilly the independent panel chair.

## 2. Purpose

- 2.1. The previous report was prepared October and presented December 2017. This report will update the Lead Member on Portsmouth Adoption Agency performance for the year April 1 2017 to 31 March 2018 and ongoing development in accordance with the Government's Adoption Reform Programme introduced in 2012.

## 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.
- 3.2. Government grants have been made available for local authorities to develop these agencies and Portsmouth City Council, Southampton City Council, Isle of Wight Council and Hampshire County Council are working with the voluntary sector to develop a regional adoption agency (RAA) - Adopt South. The date for the RAA to go live is April 2019. A proposal for the RAA was accepted by Cabinet on 5 June 2018.

#### 4. Areas that are doing well

- 4.1. The timeliness and number of Looked After Children leaving foster care through adoption has generally continued to be in accordance with government-led targets. Portsmouth has an average of 31 children needing adoptive families at any time over the course of a year. For the year 2017-2018 30 children have been adopted and at the time of writing applications for adoption orders for four children were pending in court. Subject to the court granting those adoption orders, the number of children adopted this year is fairly consistent with the previous year which was 35.
- 4.2. During this year 20 children were matched and placed with their prospective adoptive families and applications for adoption orders are generally made to the court after ten weeks of being placed. Of those children placed with adoptive families there were five pairs of siblings, including twins and children with developmental delay, an eight year old child and a child with very complex health and development issues. At the end of March there were 17 children waiting for a prospective adoptive family to be found, including a sibling group of three and two children with disabilities.
- 4.3. Whilst Portsmouth has experienced a reduction number of prospective adoptive families coming forward (in line with a national trend), we have continued to use a range of means to identify the most suitable adoptive families for children. The vast majority of adoptive families recruited and approved by Portsmouth live within a 50 mile radius of the city, as Portsmouth children need to be placed outside of the city in order to protect the identity of the adoptive placement. Of the children matched 55% percent were matched with Portsmouth approved adoptive families and 45% percent with other agency adoptive families. This reflects Portsmouth being proactive with wide-scale family finding for children particularly with complex needs, which may take time, but has secured the most suitable families for those children. The number of Adoption Panels held for the year has reduced due to the reduction in number of prospective adopter assessments having reduced but the panel has remained consistent in hearing applications for children being matched. It is anticipated that one of the benefits of being in the RAA will be to reduce the numbers and costs of placing children with other agency adoptive families.
- 4.4. Many children needing adoption come from families with complex backgrounds where they have experienced ongoing neglect and parents involved in domestic abuse, drug and alcohol abuse. Research shows the impact of those experiences can have a significant impact upon the child's development and these children need nurturing, resilient and stable families able to care for the child through to adulthood and sometimes beyond. Prospective adopters undertake a six-month assessment to enable them to develop the knowledge and understanding related to adoption preparing them for a child/children to join their family.
- 4.5. For some very young children unable to live with their birth family it is possible for them to be placed with Fostering for Adoption Placements (FfA). These are adoptive families who are also approved temporarily as foster carers. It can offer the best opportunity for the child if the carer decides on a plan for adoption. Last year there have been five children placed and/or adopted through FfA placements.
- 4.6. Portsmouth's timeliness for children being adopted has continued to improve. The government measurement in number of days from the date the child entered care to the date the child is placed with an adoptive family has improved from 541 days in March 2016 (average over three years) to 488 in March 2017. This compares favourably to the national England average number of days between 2014 and 2017, which is 520 days.

4.7. There are a number of reasons why the timescales can vary for children who are adopted. Below is a synopsis of 9 children who fell outside the target timescale for adoption. (A2 indicator on page 12).

- 1 x initial prospective adoptive placement disruption.
- Siblings x 2 were still at home when the Placement Order was granted. Therefore work on preparation for adoption could only start once there was separation and various applications to revoke by the birth family delayed the process.
- 1 child with complex health needs required additional medical investigation and reduced number of potential families.
- 1 child - initial family placement broke down and first potential linking did not progress.
- Siblings x2 with complex health needs and first potential linking withdrew.
- 1 child with complex health needs. Prospective adopters withdrew due to further knowledge of extent of disability

## 5. Adopter Recruitment

5.1. Adopter recruitment has fallen again this year while the number of children with placement orders has increased which reflects the national trend. Recruiting prospective adopters is very competitive as each local authority is seeking adoptive families for their Looked After Children. If a child is placed with another local authority's adoptive family or voluntary adoptive agency family the local authority responsible for the child incurs a government set universal fee.

5.2. Portsmouth had a total of **167** enquiries this year which resulted in total of **63 potential adoptive families** attending information sessions which led to **45** initial assessment visits culminating in **17** assessments in process over the course of the year leading to **11** adoptive families being approved as prospective adopters.

5.3. Of the remaining initial assessment visits 20 potential adoptive families were deferred due to the time to make an application to become an adopter not being right for them due to a number of reasons, for example, house moves; employment changes, health issues. However, the service retains a link with these potential families and have booked follow up appointments with them. The remaining seven potential applicants either withdrew from the enquiry process or were counselled out due to not being in a position to apply to become an adoptive family at that time or very near future.

5.4. To maximise opportunities to recruit adopters much of 2018/19's marketing strategy will be to have joint recruitment events with the Fostering Service. This was trialled at an event in January and the initial outcome was positive - leading to two families being assessed and a further two will be assessed pending some personal issues that have now been resolved.

5.5. Two further recruitment events are scheduled for May at the Spinnaker Tower and July at the Solent Hotel Fareham. All recruitment events are publicised through local radio and social media. It is anticipated that from September 2018 the competition for adopter recruitment between Portsmouth, Southampton, Isle of Wight and Hampshire will begin to reduce as each local authority will be recruiting prospective adopters as part of a regional adoption agency strategy.

## 6. Adoption Support

- 6.1. Adoptive families are supported by the adoption support service for three years after the making of the adoption order and thereafter they are entitled to support from the adoption agency local authority in which they live until the child reaches the age of 18. Therefore, Portsmouth is responsible for those children they placed with adoptive families and those placed by other adoption agencies within the city three years after the adoption order. The Adoption Support Service has continued to develop in order to provide a range of support to families. Over the course of the year there have been 32 Adoption Support Needs Assessments (ASNAs) completed. The themes for adoptive families needing support are managing children's challenging behaviours resulting from the impact of early trauma and neglect.
- 6.2. Portsmouth currently has 142 children placed with adoptive families eligible for adoption support. Of those families 32 have had an assessment of their support needs culminating in support being provided by either direct work with child/family and or specialist therapeutic support. Adoptive families can refer for an assessment of their needs at any time, others may receive support through attending learning workshops, the adopters support group or direct work with an allocated worker.
- 6.3. In order to support adoptive families and minimise the risk of adoption breakdown, the adoption support service has continued to develop offering therapeutic parenting strategies, support with child-on-parent violence, sensory integration guidance, life-story work, regular adopter workshops for specific issues related to adoption. The adoption support service in conjunction with special guardianship support is a relatively high-demand service for families. Adoptive families continue to access monthly consultations with our adoption CAMHS practitioner; virtual school education worker and education psychologist.
- 6.4. The service has been boosted as 36 families have been able to access specialist therapeutic support through funding created by the Government's Adoption Support Fund at a total cost of £114,091. This compares to 12 successful applications £51,828 granted for the year 2016/17. The ASF has been particularly beneficial enabling those families living outside of Portsmouth to receive specialist therapeutic support, for example therapeutic parenting courses, sensory integration therapy, Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing (EMDR).
- 6.5. In response to feedback from adoptive parents and their children this year the support service has provided the third adopted children's group, which focuses on supporting those children with issues related to understanding and feeling positive about their adoptive status, developing peer relationships, supporting children with transitions - particularly in school. Many adopted children need support to make sense of their birth history and adoptive history and appear to have enjoyed sharing their thoughts and feelings with other adopted children. The feedback from adoptive parents and their children has been very positive and led to the introduction of our adopted children's social activity days which will be held at least once a term.
- 6.6. The Adoption Service continues to learn and improve following feedback provided by adopted adults and birth parents. For 35 referrals received for birth records counselling, intermediary and tracing work there is an emerging theme of younger adults who were adopted requesting their adoption records. Younger adults adopted are more likely to have been adopted through care proceedings and 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. Many adopted adults will be successfully reunified with their siblings as adults.

6.7. Adoption birth-parent counselling is an open offer to birth parents losing a child to adoption. 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. The majority of adopted children will continue to have indirect contact with birth parents up to the age of 18 through a letterbox exchange co-ordinated by the service. This year there were 250 letterbox exchanges.

## **7. Areas for consideration**

7.1. Nationally, the number of children needing adoption has reduced and Portsmouth did see a reduction from an average of 42 to 31 children since 2015/16. However the number of Portsmouth children with plans for adoption appears to be at an increasing rate in comparison to last year, as is the number of placement orders, endorsing a child's plan for adoption, granted by the court. 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 relatives, long-term fostering or adoption. For the year 2017/18 22 children left care to live with relatives via special guardianship compared to 13 the previous two years. Special guardians are entitled to support for three years from the local authority placing the child and for Portsmouth the special guardian support service sits within the Adoption Support Service and is a high demand service for carers supporting children with complex needs.

7.2. Currently, there are seventeen children waiting to be matched to adoptive families. This includes a sibling group of three, two children aged seven plus and a child with special needs. The majority of Portsmouth children need to be placed outside of the city in order to maintain security of the adoptive placement. The challenge for the service is recruiting adoptive families when there has been a national reduction in potential adoptive families, particularly for children with complex needs, in a competitive environment with neighbouring local authorities and voluntary adoption agencies.

7.3. 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 in bolstering the support needs. Whilst there have been some restrictions introduced in 2017 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.

## **8. Areas of development**

8.1. A Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) project team has been established to drive the development of Adopt South, which is expected to go live in April 2019. Adopt South comprises Portsmouth City Council, Hampshire County Council, Isle of Wight Council; Southampton City Council the voluntary adoption agencies (VAAs), Barnardo's, 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.

8.2. The benefits of a regional adoption agency to Portsmouth will be:

- 8.2.1. The removal of local competitive recruitment for prospective adoptive families.
- 8.2.2. Immediate access to a wider pool of adoptive families for Portsmouth children across the region.
- 8.2.3. Adoptive placements more localised within the local regional area, promoting efficiency in adoption support, particularly specialist local service providers for adoption support.
- 8.2.4. Adoptive families being able to access robust comprehensive support packages to mitigate risk of disruption for children with complex needs.
- 8.2.5. 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.
- 8.2.6. The RAA adoption expertise to contribute to each local authority children's social work learning and development programme to promote and improve early permanence planning for children in care.

Signed by Alison Jeffery, - Director of Children, Families and Education

**Appendices:**

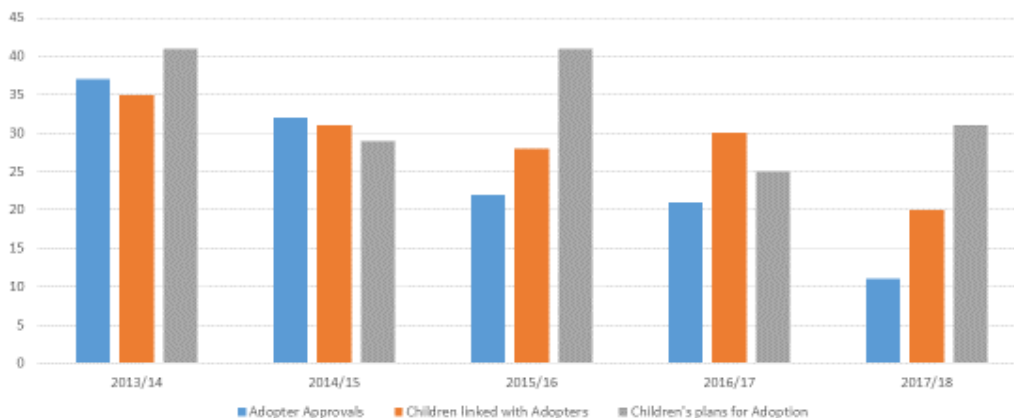
- Adoption Panel Chair Report      Appendix 1
- Adoption activity 2014-2018      Appendix 2
- PCC Adoption Scorecard          Appendix 3

**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:

- This report covers Adoption Panel activity during the period April 2017- March 2018
- During the year, 24 fortnightly meetings are scheduled with the understanding that some may be cancelled. Until this year we have averaged 21 panels per year. This year we have held 13 panels, of which 2 were additional panels organised to meet social workers time schedules, and 13 panels were cancelled.
- So the most significant issue this year, and in particular since July/August, has been the number of cancelled panels. This drop in activity is reflected in the figures for this year as shown below.
- The most significant drop has been in the 50% reduction in the number of adopters approved and this is reflected in other agencies on a national basis. Children's plans have broadly held up but placements with adopters are down by 30%.
- The only disruption to placement was a Fostering for Adoption placement which technically is a foster placement but with approved adopters. Panel has had an opportunity to discuss the disruption report and learn from it.
- It might be helpful to include statistics on F4A placements in future reports.

## ADOPTION ACTIVITY 2013-2018



### ADOPTION ACTIVITY 2013-2018 in FIGURES

	Children adopted	Adoption Plans agreed	Children linked with Adopters	Adopters approved	Disruptions
2013/14	27	41	35	37	0
2014/15	34	29	31	32	2

2015/16	25	41	28	22	2
2016/17	37	25	31	22	0
2017/18	30	31	20	11	0

- The quality of most of the Portsmouth reports remain good and panel give feedback on areas where additional information would have been helpful if it had been included in the report.
- Panel have requested that in certain circumstances ASI assessments are completed for prospective adopters with more complex backgrounds and we are pleased that this is now being done, although panel has asked that fuller information be shared with them about the outcomes of these assessments.
- Panel members feel that they have sufficient time to read the papers (a week) and can access them securely on their laptops.
- This year we have appreciated full written reports from the Medical adviser regarding her meetings with prospective adopters when discussing children to be placed.
- All panel members' appraisals have been completed for 2017/18. As always, they remain enthusiastic about their membership of panel and conscientious about their responsibilities.
- Throughout the year Panel have alerted the senior managers to their concerns about two particular children, whose welfare appeared to be compromised for too long before action was taken. Panel have been grateful and appreciative of the speedy and considered responses received.
- It would be helpful if training could be organised for panel about the realities of safeguarding children in the community. Whilst we have benefitted from brief presentations at panel on assessment and support and we have had some on line learning, panel members would like more opportunities for face-to-face training for the whole panel together.

Maura O'Reilly      March 2018

## Appendix 2

### Adoption activity 2013 – 2018

<b>Year 1 April - 31 March</b>	<b>Adoption orders No. of children adopted</b>	<b>Children's plans for adoption agreed</b>	<b>Placement Orders granted</b>	<b>Children linked with adoptive family</b>	<b>Prospective adoptive families approved</b>	<b>FfA placements</b>	<b>Placements disrupted</b>
2013/14	27	41	30	35	37	0	0
2014/15	34	29	27	31	32	1	2
2015/16	25	41	41	28	22	4	2
2016/17	35	21	19	31	21	5	0
2017/18	30	31	30	20	11	5	0 (1 FfA placement ended)

Table 2: Placement type

\*OLA other local authority \*Voluntary adoption agency

From	To	PCC	OLA*	VAA*
2014	2015	14	6	11
2015	2016	22	2	4
2016	2017	19	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
2017	<b>2018</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>

## Appendix 3 - PCC Adoption Scorecard

Portsmouth Adoption Service Scorecard - March 2018

Government thresholds for

A1 426 days

A2 121days

Government Adoption Leadership Board figures for year 2014-2017

A1 National England average 520 days

A2 National England average 220 days

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### 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-17	Apr-17	May-17	Jun-17	Jul-17	Aug-17	Sep-17	Oct-17	Nov-17	Dec-17	Jan-18	Feb-18	Mar-18
A1	493	484	482	474	481	482	488	454	460	429	429	410	414

### 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-17	Apr-17	May-17	Jun-17	Jul-17	Aug-17	Sep-17	Oct-17	Nov-17	Dec-17	Jan-18	Feb-18	Mar-18
A2	241	242	238	242	252	250	253	228	239	213	213	207	211

**A3: Children who wait less than 14 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family (number and %)**

	Mar-17	Apr-17	May-17	Jun-17	Jul-17	Aug-17	Sep-17	Oct-17	Nov-17	Dec-17	Jan-18	Feb-18	Mar-18
Number	74	73	73	68	68	71	71	71	72	73	75	77	78
%	56.5%	56.6%	57.5%	54.4%	55.3%	56.8%	57.3%	59.2%	59.5%	60.8%	61.5%	63.1%	63.9%

**A4: Adoptions from care (number adopted and % leaving care who are adopted)**

	Mar-17	Apr-17	May-17	Jun-17	Jul-17	Aug-17	Sep-17	Oct-17	Nov-17	Dec-17	Jan-18	Feb-18	Mar-18
Number	96	99	96	94	97	96	95	93	96	98	98	98	92
%	24.1%	24.3%	24.2%	23.5%	22.9%	22.8%	22.9%	22.2%	22.5%	22.5%	23.0%	22.6%	21.6%

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**A5: Number and % of children for whom the permanence decision has changed away from adoption**

	Mar-17	Apr-17	May-17	Jun-17	Jul-17	Aug-17	Sep-17	Oct-17	Nov-17	Dec-17	Jan-18	Feb-18	Mar-18
Number	19	19	19	16	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13
%	12.5%	12.7%	12.8%	11.2%	9.4%	9.2%	9.3%	9.6%	9.4%	9.6%	9.4%	9.4%	9.4%

**A6: Adoptions of children from ethnic minority backgrounds (number adopted and % of BME children leaving care who are adopted)**

	Mar-17	Apr-17	May-17	Jun-17	Jul-17	Aug-17	Sep-17	Oct-17	Nov-17	Dec-17	Jan-18	Feb-18	Mar-18
Number	6	6	6	5	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
%	8.6%	7.9%	8.1%	6.8%	6.3%	6.3%	4.8%	4.3%	4.4%	3.9%	3.8%	3.6%	3.5%



**A7: Adoptions of children aged five or over (number adopted and % of children aged 5 or over leaving care who are adopted)**

	Mar-17	Apr-17	May-17	Jun-17	Jul-17	Aug-17	Sep-17	Oct-17	Nov-17	Dec-17	Jan-18	Feb-18	Mar-18
Number	20	20	20	19	20	20	20	19	20	19	19	18	17
%	8.1%	7.9%	8.1%	7.5%	7.4%	7.5%	7.5%	7.0%	7.3%	6.7%	6.9%	6.5%	6.2%

**A8: Average length of care proceedings locally (weeks)**

	Mar-17	Apr-17	May-17	Jun-17	Jul-17	Aug-17	Sep-17	Oct-17	Nov-17	Dec-17	Jan-18	Feb-18	Mar-18
A8	25	24	24	23	23	22	23	23	23	23	23	23	23

**A9: Number of children awaiting adoption (as at Month end)**

	Mar-17	Apr-17	May-17	Jun-17	Jul-17	Aug-17	Sep-17	Oct-17	Nov-17	Dec-17	Jan-18	Feb-18	Mar-18
A9	38	33	34	34	29	32	32	30	28	26	28	28	34

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Choose Local Authority	Portsmouth
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Children			
	A1: Average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family (days)	A2: Average time between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family (days)	A3: Children who wait less than 14 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family (number and %)
LA's 3 year average (2014-17)	488	241	75 (57%)
Distance from 2014-17 performance threshold (426 and 121 days)	62 days	120 days	n/a
1 year trend - Improvement from 2016 to 2017	Average time in 2017 was shorter than in 2016	Average time in 2017 was shorter than in 2016	n/a
3 year trend - Improvement from 2013-16 to 2014-17	Average time in 2014-17 was shorter than in 2013-16	Average time in 2014-17 was shorter than in 2013-16	n/a
England 3 year average (2014-17)	520	220	11120 (53%)