



NOTICE OF MEETING

CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

FRIDAY, 21 FEBRUARY 2020 AT 5.00 PM

THE EXECUTIVE MEETING ROOM - THIRD FLOOR, THE GUILDHALL

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

CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Councillor Rob Wood (Liberal Democrat)

Group Spokespersons

Councillor Judith Smyth, Labour

Councillor Matthew Atkins, Conservative

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

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AGENDA

- 1 **Apologies for absence**
- 2 **Declarations of members' interests**
- 3 **Children and Families Portfolio Budget Monitoring for Quarter 3 - 2019/2020 (Pages 3 - 14)**

Purpose

To inform the Cabinet Member of the projected revenue expenditure within the portfolio cash limit and capital programme for the current financial year 2019/20. This report sets out the budget position and contributing factors to

the projected yearend overspend within the portfolio, as at the end of December 2019.

RECOMMENDED that the Cabinet Member for Children & Families

- 1. Note the Children and Families Portfolio forecast budget position as at the end of December 2019, of £3.8m in excess of the current approved cash limit provision.**
- 2. Note the continuing implementation of the "Stronger Futures" strategic programme designed to reduce the number of looked after children in the city, the key driver of the overspend in this portfolio.**
- 3. Approve the transfer of £10,200 funding from the Adaptions to Foster Carer Properties scheme to the scheme for a disabled looked after child.**
- 4. Note the position in respect of the approved capital schemes for the portfolio.**

4 Annual Adoption Panel Activity (Pages 15 - 26)

Purpose

The report is for information only and the purpose is to update the Lead Member on Portsmouth Adoption Service activity for the period April 1 2019 to 31 December 2019 and ongoing development in accordance with the Government's Adoption Reform Programme introduced in 2012.

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Agenda Item 3



Portsmouth
CITY COUNCIL

Title of Meeting:	Cabinet Member for Children's and Families
Date of meeting:	21 February 2020
Subject:	Children and Families Portfolio Budget Monitoring Report for the Third Quarter 2019/20
Report from:	Chris Ward, Director of Finance and Resources, Section 151 Officer and Alison Jeffery, Director of Children, Families and Education
Wards affected:	All
Key decision:	No
Budget & policy framework decision:	No

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1. To inform the Cabinet Member of the projected revenue expenditure within the portfolio cash limit and capital programme for the current financial year 2019/20. This report sets out the budget position and contributing factors to the projected yearend overspend within the portfolio, as at the end of December 2019.

2. Summary

- 2.1. Following overspend positions in the previous six years, and an initial projected financial pressure of around £1.9m on the budget for this year, the portfolio revenue cash limit is currently forecast to overspend by £3.8m in 2019/20, of which £2.8m of the overspend is on external residential placements, as shown in 5.10.3. There has been a reduction of the budget of £0.1m since Quarter 1 as a result of all portfolios having their inflation reassessed centrally.
- 2.2. The Council agreed capital programme incorporates two ongoing capital schemes for the portfolio. As outlined in the Quarter 1 report the implementation of the case management system has been delayed until spring 2020, at an additional cost of £0.8m. Capital funding has been identified and the scheme remains within the revised budget. As at the end of December the capital programme for the children's portfolio is forecast to stay within budget.

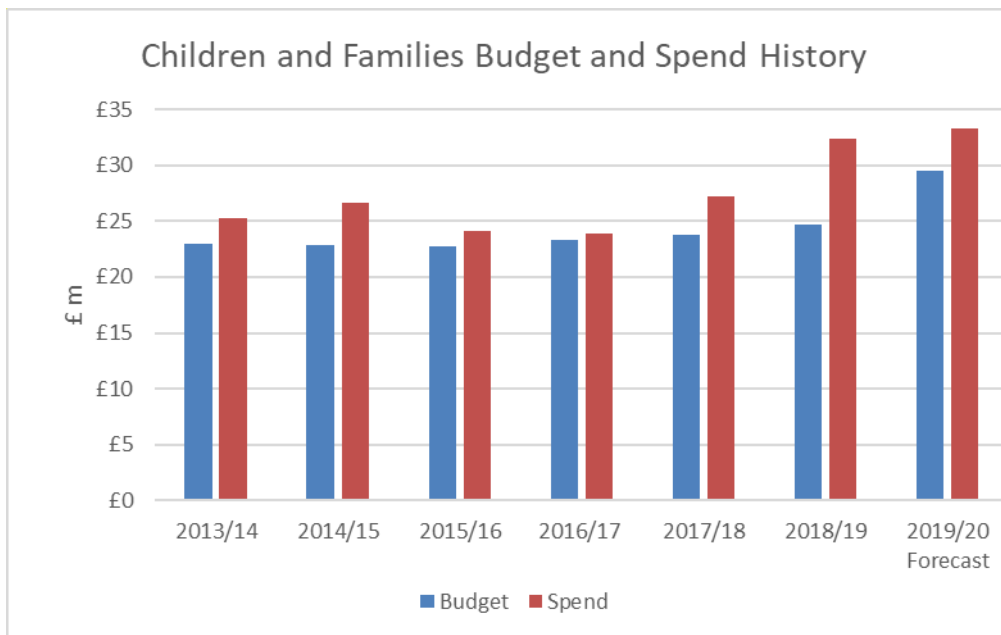
3 Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet Member:
 - 3.1.1 Notes the Children and Families Portfolio forecast budget position as at the end of December 2019, of £3.8m in excess of the current approved cash limit provision.

- 3.1.2 Notes the continuing implementation of the "Stronger Futures" strategic programme designed to reduce the number of looked after children in the city, the key driver of the overspend in this portfolio.
- 3.1.3 Approves the transfer of £10,200 funding from the Adaptions to Foster Carer Properties scheme to the scheme for a disabled looked after child.
- 3.1.4 Notes the position in respect of the approved capital schemes for the portfolio.

4 Background

4.1 Expenditure on Children's Social Care and Safeguarding has been subject to much scrutiny during the last few years, exceeding the budget provision for each of the last six years. Under the approved financial arrangements, an overspend is carried forward by the portfolio in the following financial year, since portfolios are expected to manage their financial resources across financial years in order to encourage medium term operational and financial planning. However, the overspends in this portfolio from prior years have been subsumed corporately, recognising the pressures already being placed on the portfolio at the beginning of each year and providing a clean starting point for the portfolio.



4.2 In Autumn 2018 the Government announced £1.5m of additional funding for Adults and Children's Social Care (confirmed for 2019/20 only). Full Council on 12 February 2019 approved the allocation of £1m of this funding to the Children and Families Portfolio. A further £3m was also added to the Children's Social Care Budget on an ongoing basis, recognising the financial impact of the sustained rise of Looked After Children (LAC) over the last five years, which just over the last two years has seen an increase of 108 (29%) Looked After Children. In October 2019 it was confirmed that the Social Care Support Grant would be greater than in 2019/20, with £5.4m indicated. Full council will approve the allocation of this in

February 2020 and it is anticipated that Children's will receive a greater allocation than in 2019/20.

5 Summary Position against Cash Limited Budget at the end of December 2019

5.1 The current projected overspend for the Children and Families Portfolio is £3.8m, all attributable to the Children's Social Care and Safeguarding service. The table below shows the current projection in comparison to the Day 1 projection, the 2018/19 outturn position and the December 2018/19 projection.

Service Area	Budget £000	Forecast/Outturn £000	Variation £000
Children Social Care & Safeguarding	29,545	33,335	3,790
Troubled Families	0	0	0
2019/20 (December Projection)	29,545	33,335	3,790
2019/20 (Day 1 Projection)	29,422	31,417	1,996
2018/19 (Outturn)	24,699	32,411	7,712
2018/19 (December Projection)	24,753	31,793	6,972

5.2 The Children's Social Care and Safeguarding position is broken down in the table below, and more information can be found in paragraphs 5.9.1 to 5.9.11.

	Current Budget £000	Forecast Spend £000	Variation £000
Assessment & Intervention	5,326	5,553	227
Looked After Children	19,570	22,812	3,242
Commissioning & Performance	140	140	0
Safeguarding & Monitoring	1,034	1,211	177
Support Activities	2,906	3,036	130
Edge of Care Support Service	569	583	14
Children's Social Care And Safeguarding	29,545	33,335	3,790
Troubled Families	0	0	0
TOTAL PORTFOLIO	29,545	33,335	3,790

5.3 Whilst this encompasses variations across the service areas as outlined below, the most significant area of overspend relates to the cost of Looked After Children placements.

5.4 The number and cost of external residential placements remains a significant driver with an overspend of £2.8m. This is due to having fifteen more external residential placements than budgeted, although the average annual cost is slightly lower than budgeted.

5.5 Residential placements is the focus of a significant commissioning project being undertaken across the South East region with Department For Education (DFE) financial support; the aim is to develop a collaborative approach with children's

home providers which reduces cost overall as well as meeting the range of children's needs, which are complex, more effectively. This should help bring down costs for Portsmouth in due course, but not in the short term.

- 5.6 Within the overall number of looked after children, the proportion of placements provided through the less expensive in-house fostering service is positive at 52%. The Head Looked After Children will be undertaking some further analysis of the overall use of our in house carers to ensure that we are operating at capacity. The service is continuously working to recruit more foster carers to expand this offer. This will help to keep placement costs down although additional in-house placements places pressure on the fostering service which supports these carers (see below).
- 5.7 In house residential placements are fully utilised, and at the end of quarter 3 there are no vacancies
- 5.8 The strategy to reduce the number of children needing to be looked after is known as the "Stronger Futures" strategy. It is wide ranging and is overseen closely by the Director of Children, Families and Education. The first phase of the strategy, from 2016-2018, saw the establishment of a much stronger, targeted whole family early help service, integrated with a refocused health visiting service. This enabled a better line of sight on need in the city but also a more effective earlier response which is now keeping down the total number of children requiring a statutory children's social care intervention. The second phase of the strategy while maintaining appropriate focus on early intervention has two new strands:
- (i) reshaping statutory work to provide stronger whole family support with new adult service posts co-located with children's social workers (family safeguarding)
 - (ii) remodelling our in-house foster care service to strengthen support to carers and provide a more collective approach to meeting children's needs (implementing the Mockingbird Family Model of Care).
- 5.9 Both strands increase staffing costs, to the Assessment and Intervention and Looked After Children's services respectively, but are designed to reduce costs overall by reducing Looked After Children numbers and providing more stable in-house care where needed. The short term increase in staffing costs will be mitigated by the Troubled Families carry forward referred to in paragraph 5.10.
- 5.10 The number of looked after children has started to stabilise over the last 8 months. The main reason for the increased variance in Quarter 3 compared to Quarter 1 is that within the broadly stable overall number of looked after children, a higher number of more expensive residential placements have had to be made. Each of these decisions is overseen very closely by the Deputy Director of Children and Families.
- 5.11 The detailed reasons for the projected variations are detailed in the following paragraphs.

5.11.1 Assessment and Intervention Service (£227,000 forecast overspend):

This level of overspend is the result of higher than budgeted costs in relation to Children's Disability Team placements (£339,000), homeless families (£55,000), families with no recourse to public funds (£29,000) and other operational costs (£25,000). Current staffing levels, which include the use of agency social workers and general staffing vacancies, have led to staffing costs projected at £221,000 under budget. The impact of the Family Safeguarding programme has not yet been realised as it is still in its initial stages.

5.11.2 Looked After Children (LAC) (£3,242,000 forecast overspend):

This covers five main areas - LAC placements & residential units, Unaccompanied Minor (UAM) placements, Adoption & Fostering, Care Leavers and staffing costs. There is a projected overspend on LAC placements of £3,107,000 as shown in the table below of which £2,812,000 relates to external residential placements. To increase scrutiny of placements the Director Children, Families and Education and Deputy Director are to introduce a process to review all high cost packages to ensure placements and placement costs are relevant and appropriate. It is acknowledged that whilst we need to ensure there is value for money the children in many of these placements have complex needs and present very challenging behaviour. In undertaking this exercise we will not compromise the safety or wellbeing of children As referenced above, the number of external residential placements has risen since Quarter 1, accounting for the increased projected overspend.

5.11.3 The below table shows the budgets and projections for the different placement types, and how this compares to other periods overall, with detailed information in Appendix 1. Details of new Adoption, Special Guardianship and Care Arrangement Orders can be found in Appendix 2.

December 2019 Projection	Budget			Current Projection			
	Average	Av Unit Cost	Budget	Average Predicted No.s	Av Unit Cost	Estimated Outturn	Budget Pressure
	Nos	£	£	Nos	£	£	£
External Residential	11.95	207,593	2,479,900	26.99	196,085	5,292,334	2,812,434
Independent Fostering Agency (IFA)	40.45	49,575	2,005,400	36.24	49,601	1,797,505	-207,895
In-House Fostercare	238.96	24,092	5,757,100	247.25	25,615	6,333,267	576,167
Adoption	54.00	9,009	486,500	52.58	9,145	480,898	-5,602
Residence Orders	19.80	5,071	100,400	11.17	5,250	58,628	-41,772
Special Guardianship	146.01	5,695	831,500	143.00	5,634	805,629	-25,871
TOTAL	513.50	22,708	11,660,800	517.23	28,553	14,768,262	3,107,462
2019/20 Day 1 Projection	514.04	22,899	11,771,000	534.25	25,650	13,703,270	1,932,270
2018/19 Outturn	425.35	20,250	8,613,100	523.28	26,666	13,953,722	5,340,622
2017/18 Outturn	408.60	20,386	8,329,750	501.33	23,722	11,892,530	3,562,780

The figures in the above table are subject to rounding and may not calculate exactly

Numbers for Adoption, Residence Orders and Special Guardianship only reflect those children for whom we pay financial support.

- 5.11.4 Unaccompanied Minor (UAM) costs are currently forecasting an underspend of £165,000. A £382,000 underspend is projected against under 18 UAM placement costs as all the under 18 UAM grant is shown there. However the grant also covers support costs, which are shown within staffing. This was not previously budgeted for as notification of the grant increase was given in May 2019. There remains a pressure on the UAM care leavers budget of £217,000, as the grant does not cover the full placement costs. The Home Office are currently reviewing their funding arrangements for UAM care leavers.
- 5.11.5 At the end of December 2019 there were 111 under 18 Unaccompanied Minor (UAM) placements compared with 69 at the end of December 2017. With the growth of under 18 UAM placements the pressure is now beginning to increase in the UAM care leavers budget as they become 18.
- 5.11.6 The adoption service is currently forecasting an overspend of £196,000. This is due to the budget being reduced in anticipation of £50,000 savings for the introduction of the regional adoption agency, which have yet to be realised, and also timing issues of inter-agency placements being made beforehand.
- The Fostering Support and Supervision team has staffing pressure of £108,000 forecast which is due to experienced staff being in post where the costs are greater than the budget.
- 5.11.7 **Commissioning & Performance** (on budget): This is a newly formed service area encompassing the Portsmouth Safeguarding Children's Partnership which is forecast to be on budget.
- 5.11.8 **Safeguarding & Monitoring** (£176,000 forecast over spend): Staffing forecasts are showing an overall overspend of £172,000 due to staffing pressures within the Service Quality Team and part year costs of the Children's Disability Team manager post and redundancy costs.
- 5.11.9 The service have had to employ one more independent reviewing officer in order to meet statutory duties for Looked After Children, and the previous staffing levels could not fulfil this (there has been an increase of 108 Looked After Children since September 2017 to September 2019).
- 5.11.10 **Support Activities** (£130,000 forecast overspend): There is a forecast overspend of £95,000 on legal fees. This is largely a result of HM Courts and Tribunal Services identifying a backlog of payments due to them of which £58,000 related to prior financial years.
- 5.11.11 Recruitment and retention payments to Social Workers are £17,000 in excess of budget provision while software costs across the service have created an overspend of £15,000.
- 5.11.12 **Edge of Care Services** (£14,000 forecast overspend): The service is facing a £50,000 pressure as it is funding the reunification work, which improves the outcomes of the children and young people, and reduces our

Looked After Children numbers and costs, which are reported under the Looked After Children section. This is largely offset by a vacant post within the Edge of Care team (Battenburg) (£14,000) and an underspend on remand strategy (£26,000).

- 5.11 By the end of the financial year, the Troubled Families Programme is expecting a carry forward. Currently 70% payment by results is projected which would result in a carry forward of £971,000. In September 2019 it was announced that Troubled Families would continue for another year and a more detailed announcement in January 2020 confirmed sufficient funding to continue to operate the troubled families programme in full for a further year.

6 Capital

- 6.1 Shown below is the approved capital programme as at the end of September and payments made to date. Funding for all schemes was approved by Council on 12 February 2019, further approvals were granted to provide a Capital Grant regarding housing for a looked after child and an increase in funding due to the necessary delay to the case management implementation. Funding for both projects has been identified through transfers from underspent schemes, use of reserves and corporate contingency.

Scheme	Approved funding previous quarter	Approved adjustments	Current approved funding	Actual expenditure to December 2019	Forecast spend
	£	£	£	£	£
Adaptions to Foster carer properties	195,000		195,000	108,300	184,800
Capital Grant - Housing for Looked After Child	200,000		200,000	210,200	210,200
Children's Case Management software replacement	1,907,000	800,000	2,707,000	1,566,600	2,707,000
Tangier Road Children's Home	495,000		495,000	506,000	495,000
Beechside Children's Home	55,000		55,000	53,700	55,000
E C Roberts - Refurbishment Loan	250,000		250,000	7,200	250,000
Enable and Improve Mobile Working	191,000		191,000	0	191,000
Total	3,293,000	800,000	4,093,000	2,452,000	4,093,000

- 6.2 Adaptations to Foster Carer properties relates to capital grants that assist in delivering foster placements. Each proposal is subject to a separate financial appraisal and approval arrangement. There has been one payment of £13,750 during the current financial year. A further request is currently progressing and it is anticipated that the grant will be fully spent by the end of the financial year
- 6.3 As mentioned in Quarter 1 report a grant was approved to provide suitable housing for a disabled looked after child. The budget is forecast to overspend due to the complex legal arrangement attached to the grant and it is proposed to cover these costs through transferring funding from the Adaptions to Foster Carer Properties scheme.
- 6.4 The supplier of the current Children's Case Management system has indicated their intention to cease supporting the system from 2020. Work is underway to implement a replacement system, this has been delayed until Spring 2020 to ensure effective and complete migration of case management data, the additional costs of the delay have been identified and funded. The cost of the implementation is expected to be within the revised budget allocation.
- 6.5 The Tangier Road Children's Home works have been completed, following a challenge to the level of fees charged to the project, the project is expected to be completed within the available budget, however we are expecting some final transactions outstanding at the end of December.
- 6.6 The Beechside Children's Home had been identified as requiring some specific renovation works to comply with regulations and standards. These works have now been completed within the budget availability, with some final payments outstanding at the end of December.
- 6.7 The Enable and Improve Mobile Working Scheme was approved in the capital programme in February 2019, but was published in the wrong portfolio - this has now been corrected. No expenditure is expected on this scheme in 2019-20, as the project is expected to be considered in 2020-21 due to the delay in Mosaic implementation.

7 Summary

- 7.1 The portfolio revenue budget is currently overspending, which can largely be attributed to placement costs as described in Section 5 of this report.
- 7.2 Whilst spending in Children's Social Care is outside of the allocated budget in Portsmouth, we are not considered a high spending service when benchmarked against comparators. The Children and Families Department has begun implementation of the 'Stronger Futures - Phase Two' strategy to enable the service to achieve financial sustainability over the 2019 - 2023 period, which is closely overseen by the Director of Children, Families and Education. The strategy has been externally scrutinised by external consultants from Peopletoo who have endorsed that the strategy is fit for purpose.
- 7.3

8 Integrated impact assessment

8.1 An integrated impact assessment is not required as the recommendations do not have a positive or negative impact on communities and safety, regeneration and culture, environment and public space or equality and diversity.

9 Legal comments

9.1 There are no legal implications arising directly from the recommendations set out in paragraphs 3.1.1 to 3.1.4 of this report.

10 Director of Finance comments

10.1 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 Angela Mann, Finance Manager, if required.

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

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Signed by: Cabinet Member



Appendix 1

Historical and Current LAC Placement Information

December 2018 Projection	Budget			Current Projection			
	Average	Av Unit Cost	Budget	Average Predicted No.s	Av Unit Cost	Estimated Outturn	Budget Pressure
	Nos	£	£	Nos	£	£	£
External Residential	9.02	137,151	1,237,100	21.55	198,446	4,276,514	3,039,414
Semi Residential	0	0	0	3.22	34,998	112,694	112,694
Independent Fostering Agency (IFA)	36.62	39,379	1,442,000	40.27	49,682	2,000,678	558,678
In-House Fostercare	207.10	23,253	4,815,600	241.08	24,263	5,849,444	1,033,844
Adoption	41.81	8,371	350,000	58.17	8,768	510,003	160,003
Residence Orders	37.24	4,834	180,000	13.33	5,026	67,014	-112,986
Special Guardianship	93.56	6,289	588,400	148.67	5,624	836,061	247,661
TOTAL			8,613,100			13,652,408	5,039,308

March 2019 Outturn	Budget			Current Projection			
	Average	Av Unit Cost	Budget	FTE 2018/19	Av Unit Cost	Final Outturn	Budget Pressure
	Nos	£	£	Nos	£	£	£
External Residential	9.02	137,151	1,237,100	25.79	183,415	4,729,486	3,492,386
Independent Fostering Agency (IFA)	36.62	39,379	1,442,000	40.07	49,575	1,986,669	544,669
In-House Fostercare	207.10	23,253	4,815,600	242.25	24,092	5,836,264	1,020,664
Adoption	41.81	8,371	350,000	55.50	9,009	500,010	150,010
Residence Orders	37.24	4,834	180,000	12.75	5,071	64,653	-115,347
Special Guardianship	93.56	6,289	588,400	146.92	5,695	836,641	248,241
TOTAL			8,613,100			13,953,722	5,340,622

April 2019 Day 1 Projection	Budget			Current Projection			
	Average	Av Unit Cost	Budget	Average Predicted No.s	Av Unit Cost	Estimated Outturn	Budget Pressure
	Nos	£	£	Nos	£	£	£
External Residential	12.48	207,593	2,590,100	23.00	183,649	4,223,930	1,633,830
Independent Fostering Agency (IFA)	40.45	49,575	2,005,400	45.25	46,733	2,114,668	109,268
In-House Fostercare	238.96	24,092	5,757,100	254.00	23,567	5,985,905	228,805
Adoption	54.00	9,009	486,500	54.00	9,009	486,496	-4
Residence Orders	19.80	5,071	100,400	12.00	5,071	60,850	-39,550
Special Guardianship	146.01	5,695	831,500	146.00	5,695	831,421	-79
TOTAL	514.04	22,899	11,771,000	534.25	25,650	13,703,270	1,932,270



Placement Type	Budget			Current Projection			
	Average	Av Unit Cost	Budget	Average Predicted No.s	Av Unit Cost	Estimated Outturn	Budget Pressure
	Nos	£	£	Nos	£	£	£
External Residential	12.48	207,593	2,590,100	20.80	197,089	4,099,558	1,509,458
Independent Fostering Agency (IFA)	40.45	49,575	2,005,400	34.82	47,841	1,665,932	-339,468
In-House Fostercare	238.96	24,092	5,757,100	250.83	24,022	6,025,519	268,419
Adoption	54.00	9,009	486,500	54.25	9,100	493,667	7,167
Residence Orders	19.80	5,071	100,400	12.00	5,097	61,163	-39,237
Special Guardianship	146.01	5,695	831,500	146.25	5,721	836,631	5,131
TOTAL	514.04	22,899	11,771,000	518.95	25,402	13,182,471	1,411,471

Placement Type	Budget			Current Projection			
	Average	Av Unit Cost	Budget	Average Predicted No.s	Av Unit Cost	Estimated Outturn	Budget Pressure
	Nos	£	£	Nos	£	£	£
External Residential	12.48	207,593	2,590,100	24.74	183,941	4,550,706	1,960,606
Independent Fostering Agency (IFA)	40.45	49,575	2,005,400	32.66	48,002	1,567,760	-437,640
In-House Fostercare	238.96	24,092	5,757,100	256.25	24,040	6,160,187	403,087
Adoption	54.00	9,009	486,500	52.67	9,053	476,816	-9,684
Residence Orders	19.80	5,071	100,400	11.42	5,198	59,349	-41,051
Special Guardianship	146.01	5,695	831,500	144.67	5,720	827,457	-4,043
TOTAL	514.04	22,899	11,771,000	522.40	26,115	13,642,276	1,871,276

Placement Type	Budget			Current Projection			
	Average	Av Unit Cost	Budget	Average Predicted No.s	Av Unit Cost	Estimated Outturn	Budget Pressure
	Nos	£	£	Nos	£	£	£
External Residential	11.95	207,593	2,479,900	26.99	196,085	5,292,334	2,812,434
Independent Fostering Agency (IFA)	40.45	49,575	2,005,400	36.24	49,601	1,797,505	-207,895
In-House Fostercare	238.96	24,092	5,757,100	247.25	25,615	6,333,267	576,167
Adoption	54.00	9,009	486,500	52.58	9,145	480,898	-5,602
Residence Orders	19.80	5,071	100,400	11.17	5,250	58,628	-41,772
Special Guardianship	146.01	5,695	831,500	143.00	5,634	805,629	-25,871
TOTAL	513.50	22,708	11,660,800	517.23	28,553	14,768,262	3,107,462

Appendix 2
Numbers of Adoption Orders, Special Guardianship Orders and Child Arrangement Orders

Quarter 3	Adoption Orders	Special Guardianship Orders (previously LAC)	Child Arrangement Orders (previously LAC)
Quarter 3 2019/20	8	3	3
Quarter 3 2018/19	9	2	4
2019/20 to end of Quarter 3	20	10	5
Total 2018/19	15	10	10

THIS ITEM IS FOR INFORMATION ONLY. (Please note that 'Information Only' reports do not require Integrated 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 December 2019
Date of meeting: 31/01/20
Report by: Jackie Clark, Service Leader, Adoption
Wards affected: None

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) Update re Portsmouth becoming part of the Regional Adoption Agency -Adopt South.

2. Purpose

- 2.1. The previous report was presented March 2019. This report will update the Lead Member on Portsmouth Adoption Service activity for the period April 1 2019 to 31 December 2019 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 adoption 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 have worked the voluntary sector to develop a regional adoption agency (RAA) - Adopt South. The proposal for Adopt South was agreed by Cabinet on 5 June 2018. Subsequently Adopt South went live 1 April 2019. A summary of Adopt South development is provided within this report.

- 3.3. Portsmouth Children and Families Service were subject to Ofsted inspection September 2018 and the service was graded as 'Good'. With regard to the adoption service the Ofsted report stated:
- 3.4. 'Children who need adoption benefit from timely decision-making and effective planning. Good assessment, training and support is available for prospective adopters. Children move quickly to live with their adoptive families and they enjoy stability. Good use is made of the adoption support fund to meet children's therapeutic needs. Close work with CAMHS, the virtual school, educational psychologists and play therapist holistically supports carers to meet their children's needs'.

4. Areas that are doing well

- 4.1. The timeliness and number of Looked After Children leaving foster care to adoption has generally continued to be in accordance with government-led targets. Portsmouth currently has an average of 25 children with a proposed plan of adoption. Some of those children will successfully return to the care of their birthparents or live other family members.
- 4.2. The number of children adopted during the period is 20 and this cohort of children includes a sibling group of three, two sibling pairs, including twins. Two of the children were age 5 or more.
- 4.3. There were 16 children matched with adoptive families whereby applications for adoption orders in the process of application for adoption orders being submitted to court. This group of children include two children with very complex health and development issues who have been waiting for adoptive families for more than twelve months.
- 4.4. For some 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 court decides they need to be adopted. Between 1st April 2019 and 31 December 2019 there were two children matched with Fostering for Adoption families
- 4.5. At 31 December 19 there were 10 children awaiting for adoptive families to be identified. Of those children waiting four have complex health and development issues, two of Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority (BAME).
- 4.6. In comparison with the year 2018/19 the number of Portsmouth children with a plan of adoption has reduced and reflects the national trend of less children leaving care for adoption. When children come into care reunification birth parents or permanence with a member of the child's extended family will always be explored before an adoption plan agreed. This reflects the legal duty that a children becomes subject of care proceedings the court will only grant an order agreeing for a child to be placed for adoption when it is satisfied the child cannot live with birth family or member of the wider family. Therefore the number of children with adoption plans may have reduced but the number of children moving to other permanence placements - kinship foster care and special guardianship has increased. Children are also returning to parents care with a care order in place to

enable the local authority to share parental responsibility until the family is in a position to fully care for their child.

- 4.7. Many children needing adoption come from families with complex backgrounds where they have experienced trauma due to parental neglect, domestic abuse, drugs 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.
- 4.8. Portsmouth's timeliness for children being adopted has continued to improve. The government threshold measurement in number of days from the date the child entered care to the date the child is placed with an adoptive family is 426 days. For the current period Portsmouth's timescale is 385 days.
- 4.9. The other government timescale is the number of days the court agrees a child to be placed for adoption and the local authority agreeing to the potential match with an adoptive family is 121 days. For Portsmouth the timescale for this period is 204 days. Both sets of timescales compare favourably with the England national average timescales published December for the year 2018/19 by the government Adoption and Special Guardianship Board (ASGLB) at 433 and 173 days. Some children needing adoptive families have very complex needs and identifying the most suitable family for them can take some time. This can impact timescales but once that family identified the positive outcome for the child is relative to the child. For Portsmouth children needing adoption the opportunity to move from foster carer to a suitable adoptive family within timescales is likely to be boosted by the implementation of the regional adoption agency Adopt South that launched 1st April 2019.

5. Adopt South

- 5.1. Adopt South comprises Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Southampton, Portsmouth local authorities with the voluntary adoption agencies Parents and Children Together (PACT) and Barnardo's adoption agencies. The primary functions of Adopt South are to recruit and support adoptive families providing a comprehensive assessment and training service to prepare prospective adoptive parents for adoption and to provide a wide range of adoption support services to those families who have adopted a child/children. The range of support includes one to one support, parenting programmes, specialist therapeutic support, mentoring, and social events.
- 5.2. The regional adoption agency has removed the competitive element of the four local authorities recruiting adoptive families through having a centralised recruitment service which has generated a total of 87 adoptive families being recruited at 31 December. For Portsmouth this has enabled children to be more likely placed with families across the regional area. Those children and their families are supported within a shared ethos of delivering a co-ordinated and high standard service throughout the process of adoption and beyond.
- 5.3. Adopter recruitment is measured against the threshold of a two stage assessment totalling six months. In Adopt South the majority have been completed within timescales and are potentially matched with a child/children within three months of being approved.

6. Adoption Support

- 6.1. Many children needing adoption come from families with complex backgrounds where they have experienced trauma due to ongoing neglect, families characterised by 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. As children are matched with prospective adoptive families it is imperative to those families they are able to access support.
- 6.2. Adoption support services have been strengthened by Adopt South. Portsmouth currently has 142 adoptive families eligible for adoption support. Families may request an assessment of their support needs at any time adoptive families can now access training programmes, workshops; mentoring and support groups, one to one support, consultations with educational psychologist and CAMHS practitioner and social activities.
- 6.3. The Government Adoption Support Fund (ASF), also enables adoptive families to have access therapeutic support. For the current period Portsmouth has made 21 applications for specialist support to be provided to families culminating in a total of £85,295 being granted. The ASF has been particularly beneficial enabling those families living outside of the geographical region to receive specialist therapeutic support, for example multi-disciplinary assessments, therapeutic parenting courses and sensory integration therapy.
- 6.4. The Adoption Service continues to learn and improve following feedback provided by adopted adults and birth parents. Between 1st April and 31st December there have been 27 referrals received for birth records counselling, intermediary work. This figure is consistent with last year which culminated in a total of 42 referrals being made. There is an increasing number 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 the detail in decisions made to separate them from birth parents and particularly if they were separated as siblings. There has been an increase in adopted adults seeking reunification with their birth family members, particularly siblings. This may be due to the subject of adoption being more open in the public domain and advances in development of internet and social media.
- 6.5. 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. Post adoption contact with birth family members is encouraged with adoptive families 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 adoption service. Over the course of the year there are 250 letterbox exchanges.

7. Areas for consideration

- 7.1. Nationally, the number of children needing adoption has reduced nationally and Portsmouth has seen a reduction in the number of children with a court agreed adoption

plan (Placement Order), over the past three years .Although the number of children adopted has increased from 2017/18. 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. Children may be placed with kinship (family and friends foster carers) before securing a Special Guardianship order. For the year 2018/19 a total 61 children were placed kinship carers or special guardians. For the current period there is a total of 30 children placed with kinship carers or special guardians. 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. The adoption support service is available to an average total of 142 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. For 2020 the government has given a boost of 4.5million to the ASF which will enable families to access specialist therapeutic support. Adopt South has meant the four local authorities have centralised their ASF enabling the families to access to a wide range of specialist support. The challenge will be for the Adopt South to enhance and sustain the improved adoption support services within a static budget.

8. Areas of development

8.1. The Regional Adoption Agency 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. Adopt South specialises in the recruitment of adoptive families; high quality and expedient family finding for the local authorities and offering comprehensive support for adoptive families.

8.2. Adopt South proposes to recruit 150 adoptive families suitable for matching for a total of 170-180 children likely to need adoptive families from the four local authorities by April 2020. The government is providing £650,000 investment to regional adoption agencies to boost adoptive family recruitment, particularly for those children with complex needs and deemed harder to place i.e older children, sibling groups and children of Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority heritage.

8.3. In summary the strengths of Adopt South to Portsmouth are:

8.3.1. The removal of local competitive recruitment for prospective adoptive families.

8.3.2. Immediate access to a wider pool of adoptive families for Portsmouth children across the region.

8.3.3. Adoptive placements more localised within the local regional area, promoting efficiency in adoption support, particularly specialist local service providers for adoption support.

8.3.4. 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.

- 8.3.5. Early indications regarding Adopt South show an increase in the number of adoptive families available for those children needing adoption and that the timeliness for Portsmouth children leaving care for adoption continues to be on an improving trajectory.
- 8.3.6. Regionalising adoption support enables adoptive families being able to access robust comprehensive support packages to mitigate risk of disruption for children with complex needs.

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Signed by (Director)

Appendices:

- Adoption activity 2014-2020
- PCC Adoption Scorecard December 2019

Appendix 1

Adoption activity 2013 – 2020

Year 1 April - 31 March	Adoption orders No. of children adopted	Children's plans for adoption agreed	Placement Orders granted	Children linked with adoptive family	Prospective adoptive families approved	FfA placements	Placements disrupted
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	1
2018/19	15	30	29	25	15	5	0
2019/20* 01/04/19- 31/12/19	20	20	13	16	87 Total Adopt South	2	2

Appendix 2 - PCC Adoption Scorecard

Government thresholds for timeliness

A1: 426 days - from date child enters care to moving in with adoptive family

A2 : 121days -from date the court agrees to local authority placing a child for adoption to the date the local authority agrees the match for the child with an adoptive family

Government Adoption and Special Guardianship Leadership Board (ASGLB), figures for year 2018/19

A1 National England average 433 days

A2 National England average 173 days

Please see Portsmouth's Adoption Scorecard December 2019 below

Adoption Team Report - December 2019

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

3yr average	Jan-19	Feb-19	Mar-19	Apr-19	May-19	Jun-19	Jul-19	Aug-19	Sep-19	Oct-19	Nov-19	Dec-19
A1	386	384	385	385	379	392	394	397	396	391	388	385

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	Jan-19	Feb-19	Mar-19	Apr-19	May-19	Jun-19	Jul-19	Aug-19	Sep-19	Oct-19	Nov-19	Dec-19
A2	191	190	188	187	183	201	201	202	206	200	200	204

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

	Jan-19	Feb-19	Mar-19	Apr-19	May-19	Jun-19	Jul-19	Aug-19	Sep-19	Oct-19	Nov-19	Dec-19
Number	76	81	76	72	67	64	67	69	67	66	62	62
%	61.79%	63.78%	62.30%	59.02%	59.82%	59.26%	60.36%	62.16%	60.91%	60.55%	60.78%	63.27%

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

	Jan-19	Feb-19	Mar-19	Apr-19	May-19	Jun-19	Jul-19	Aug-19	Sep-19	Oct-19	Nov-19	Dec-19
Number	83	87	81	81	74	77	78	77	76	77	75	75
%	18.57%	18.91%	17.53%	17.20%	15.61%	16.14%	16.25%	15.75%	15.32%	15.52%	14.56%	14.42%

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

	Jan-19	Feb-19	Mar-19	Apr-19	May-19	Jun-19	Jul-19	Aug-19	Sep-19	Oct-19	Nov-19	Dec-19
Number	15	12	12	14	16	18	20	19	19	18	20	19
%	10.87%	8.70%	8.70%	10.37%	13.18%	14.17%	15.15%	14.50%	14.62%	14.06%	16.00%	15.57%

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

	Jan-19	Feb-19	Mar-19	Apr-19	May-19	Jun-19	Jul-19	Aug-19	Sep-19	Oct-19	Nov-19	Dec-19
Number	6	6	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
%	3.82%	3.66%	2.40%	2.31%	1.69%	1.67%	1.65%	1.60%	1.55%	1.55%	1.48%	1.44%

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

	Jan-19	Feb-19	Mar-19	Apr-19	May-19	Jun-19	Jul-19	Aug-19	Sep-19	Oct-19	Nov-19	Dec-19
Number	13	14	12	12	10	11	11	10	10	10	9	9
%	4.10%	4.26%	3.57%	3.50%	2.88%	3.14%	3.14%	2.77%	2.72%	2.72%	2.33%	2.31%

A8: Average length of care proceedings locally (weeks)

	Jan-19	Feb-19	Mar-19	Apr-19	May-19	Jun-19	Jul-19	Aug-19	Sep-19	Oct-19	Nov-19	Dec-19
A8	20	20	21	21	20	20	21	21	21	21	21	20

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

	Jan-19	Feb-19	Mar-19	Apr-19	May-19	Jun-19	Jul-19	Aug-19	Sep-19	Oct-19	Nov-19	Dec-19
A9	44	44	43	41	38	33	35	37	36	34	29	25

Adoption and Special Guardianship Leadership Board Quarterly Data Report: Q4 201819 - England New data on the performance of the adoption system in Quarter 4 of 2018-19 (January to March 2019) has been published by the Adoption and Special Guardianship Leadership Board (ASGLB). The data is derived from the quarterly ASGLB adoption survey and other government statistical collections, and the report, produced by Coram-i, includes the following figures:

- At 31 March 2019 there were 2800 children with a placement order waiting to be placed with an adoptive family (a 4.4% decrease from 31 December 2018). □ 41% of children waiting at 31 March 2019 had been waiting 18 months or more (compared to 37% at 31 December 2018).**
- The number of new ADM decisions and placement orders have continued to fall with both decreasing 8% in 2018-19 compared to 2017-18.**
- The number of new registrations, prospective adopters awaiting approval and adoptive family approvals have all increased between 2017-18 and 2018-19 - by 14%, 27% and 1% respectively.**

Links to the ASGLB Business Intelligence report and full agency level data are provided on the Coram-i website.

