

**TRANSFORMING OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN IN CARE**

*To:* **Children and Young People**

*Meeting Date:* **9<sup>th</sup> January 2018**

*From:* **Executive Director People and Communities.**

*Electoral division(s):* **All**

*Forward Plan ref:* **KD2018/028**      *Key decision:* **Yes**

*Purpose:* **The Committee is asked to consider the draft business case for improving outcomes for children in care while reducing overall costs.**

*Recommendation:* **The committee is asked to endorse the approaches set out in the Business Case, and specifically to approaches proposed for supporting the recruitment of foster carers in Cambridgeshire and the deep dive into the experience and outcomes for children and young people in care in Cambridgeshire.**

<b><i>Officer contact:</i></b>		<b><i>Member contacts:</i></b>	
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## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 Numbers of children in care in Cambridgeshire are now significantly higher than the average of other local authorities. It is important that we understand the reasons for this so that we can take action to ensure that we are looking after the right children for the right length of time.
- 1.2 Overall, Cambridgeshire does well in terms of the proportion of children and young people in care who are placed with foster carers. Unfortunately, however, too many are placed with foster carers provided by Independent Fostering Agencies. While the care they receive is not likely to be any different from that which they would receive if they were placed with our own carers, Agency carers often live further away from Cambridgeshire, meaning that children may experience more disruption. We also know Agency carers less well than our own, making it less easy to match children to carers with confidence. Finally, agency carers are considerably more costly in terms of unit placement costs than our own 'in-house' carers.

## **2. MAIN ISSUES**

- 2.1 The business case attached at Appendix 1 to this report sets out our approach to addressing the need to understand the underlying reasons behind there being significantly more children and young people in care than in other similar authorities.
- 2.2 One hypothesis is that children in care in Cambridgeshire are not progressing through the care system to permanent outcomes – like adoption, special guardianship or a return home to family or friends – as quickly as they might. If this is the case, then it is important that we act because we have a duty to ensure that children progress to permanent outcomes as quickly as they can since this is generally associated with the most positive outcomes. It is also important since looking after children is very costly, and should numbers remain at current levels or increase further, there will be an inevitable impact on levels of funding available for other services for children and families.
- 2.3 The business case also details how we intend to support the increased recruitment of foster carers. As noted above, it is better to place children with carers we know well and who live locally than with agency foster carers who we know less well and are likely to live further away from the child's community. Recruitment of foster carers in the current year has been significantly improved compared with previous years, which is good, but we would like to see this increase further and faster.
- 2.4 The business case identifies a number of ways that we will increase recruitment through a significant boost to marketing and other campaigning, as well as ensuring that we have capacity to assess and provide support for carers that we recruit to the service.
- 2.5 The investment proposed within the business case has been supported by the General Purposes Committee. Although management of placement budgets is an area of high risk given their demand led nature, success in reducing overall numbers and recruiting more carers will result in significant reductions in current levels of expenditure, helping

to protect other areas of service delivery.

### **3. ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES**

#### **3.1 Developing the local economy for the benefit of all**

There are no significant implications for this priority.

#### **3.2 Helping people live healthy and independent lives**

The following bullet points set out details of implications identified by officers:

- Children and young people who live in permanent family arrangements have much better lifelong healthy outcomes and develop greater resilience, helping them to live independently as adults.

#### **3.3 Supporting and protecting vulnerable people**

The following bullet points set out details of implications identified by officers:

- Children and young people in care are highly vulnerable;
- Good quality family-based placements close to home communities result in better long term outcomes than other placement alternatives;
- Where children can progress through the care system to successful permanence either with their own families, or move on to adoption or special guardianship, outcomes are generally better when plans are progressed without delay.

### **4. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS**

#### **4.1 Resource Implications**

The following bullet points set out details of significant implications identified by officers:

- The business case sets out the investment that is needed in order to deliver the expected outcomes of reduced numbers of children in care and increased numbers of 'in-house' carers;
- This investment has been agreed by the General Purposes Committee;
- Success will result in significant savings against current levels of expenditure.

#### **4.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications**

The following bullet points set out details of significant implications identified by officers:

- Following agreement by senior officers, the work relating to the deep dive analysis of the journeys of our children and young people in care is being undertaken by Oxford Brooks/Institute of Public Care.

#### **4.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications**

The following bullet points set out details of significant implications identified by officers:

- The Council has a statutory duty to ensure that there are sufficient local placements for children and young people in care. Recruiting more in-house foster carers will support the Council to meet this duty;
- The Council has a variety of statutory duties relating to children and young people in care, and in ensuring that this group of children and young people are supported to achieve good outcomes.

#### 4.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

*There are no significant implications within this category*

#### 4.5 Engagement and Communications Implications

*There are no significant implications within this category*

#### 4.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement

*There are no significant implications within this category.*

#### 4.7 Public Health Implications

*There are no significant implications within this category.*

<b>Implications</b>	<b>Officer Clearance</b>
<b>Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance?</b>	Business Case cleared by Finance.
<b>Have the procurement/contractual/ Council Contract Procedure Rules implications been cleared by Finance?</b>	Procurement of the work by Oxford Brookes cleared by Chris Malyon and Quentin Baker
<b>Has the impact on statutory, legal and risk implications been cleared by LGSS Law?</b>	
<b>Have the equality and diversity implications been cleared by your Service Contact?</b>	Yes Lou Williams
<b>Have any engagement and communication implications been cleared by Communications?</b>	

<b>Have any localism and Local Member involvement issues been cleared by your Service Contact?</b>	Yes Lou Williams
<b>Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health</b>	

<b>Source Documents</b>	<b>Location</b>
None	