

25 November, 2014

**FOSTERING AND ADOPTION WORKING GROUP – TERMS OF
REFERENCE**

Ward(s) All

Portfolio: Councillor B. Cassidy – Children's Services

Report:

At its meeting on 14 October, 2014 the Children's Services Scrutiny and Performance Panel appointed a working group to consider fostering and adoption.

The terms of reference have been drafted and are attached at Appendix 1 to this report for the Panels consideration.


Recommendations:

That:

- 1. subject to any comments Members may wish to make, the terms of reference for the Fostering and Adoption Working Group be approved;**

and;
- 2. A lead member be appointed.**

Contact Officer:

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Walsall Council Scrutiny and Performance Panel Work Group
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Work Group Name:	Fostering and Adoption Working Group
Panel:	Children's Services
Municipal Year:	2014/15
Lead Member:	TBA
Lead Officer:	Lisa Preston
Scrutiny Officer:	Neil Picken
Membership:	Councillor T. Jukes Councillor P. Lane Councillor D. Shires Councillor K. Phillips

1.	Context
	<p>It is important that Members of the Children's and Young People Scrutiny Panel take the time to consider all matters within the remit of the Panel as this developed understanding leads to effective and improved Scrutiny.</p> <p>It is not possible to consider every aspect at Panel meetings in detail and so it is suggested that short term working groups be established (no more than one at any given time) and tasked with considering a number of topics in-depth.</p> <p>Fostering and Adoption was included within the work programme as an area which members wished to undertake a detailed review. Members are keen to review the service to ensure that it is effective and providing the best possible service for children and young people within Walsall.</p>
2.	Objectives
	<p>For Members to:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review resources and processes in place to facilitate and support fostering and adoption; • Review support available to adults, children and young people before, during and post placement; • Identify pressures/obstacles within the service and the potential impact of diminishing budgets on future service delivery; • Compare performance to statistical neighbours over a three year period; • Understand the national context; • Identify areas of good practice both in Walsall and other authorities; • Facilitate an understanding of the legal framework in relation to

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	<p>fostering and adoption;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify barriers to fostering and adoption and explore initiatives in place to overcome these; • Consider conversion rates from potential adopters to approved adopters; • Establish the number of breakdowns in placements and understand the reasons for this and how learning is gathered to try to limit breakdowns from occurring; • identify potential areas for improvement; • Review the impact of recruitment and retention/marketing campaigns to establish what more can be done to attract foster carers and adopters; • Establish how effective the service is at providing on-going support for foster carers and adopters including how responsive it is at the point of initial expression of concern to prevent placement breakdown.
3.	Scope
	<p>Members to:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit and spend time with staff delivering services to develop an operational understanding of the service; • Visit other authorities to identify best practice; • Speak directly to service users to establish their view on existing service provision; • Meet with senior officers to establish and understand strategies in place to support and improve services for fostering and adoption; • Understand and consider the budget available for delivery of services and consider any potential impact budget reductions could have; • To request information as necessary to better understand the legal framework, key processes, governance arrangements and policies and procedures in place; • To review all information gathered both quantitative and qualitative to make recommendations for improvement where necessary.
4.	Equalities Implications
	<p>When considering each area Members will consider whether each area adequately delivers towards the six strands of equalities, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age • Disability

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gender• Race• Religion or belief• Sexual orientation
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5.	Who else will you want to take part?									
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff from Children's Services; Foster Carers; Adopters at various stages within the process; Children and Young People. 									
6.	Timescales & Reporting Schedule									
	<p>To report to the Children's & Young People Scrutiny and Performance Panel on:</p> <p>Terms of reference – 25.11.14</p> <p>Final report – 24.02.15</p> <p>To report to – Cabinet – 18.03.15</p>									
7.	Risk factors									
	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 35%;">Risk</th> <th style="width: 25%;">Likelihood</th> <th style="width: 40%;">Measure to Resolve</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Difficulties engaging with teams</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Medium</td> <td>Engage with teams early to make necessary arrangements</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Completing all work in a timely manner</td> <td style="text-align: center;">High</td> <td> Advance schedule of meetings arranged. Consider interim report if necessary. </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Risk	Likelihood	Measure to Resolve	Difficulties engaging with teams	Medium	Engage with teams early to make necessary arrangements	Completing all work in a timely manner	High	Advance schedule of meetings arranged. Consider interim report if necessary.
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Date Agreed:		Date Updated:	
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Timetable: TBA subject to Members availability

DATE	ACTIVITY
w/c 8.12.14	Members to meet with senior management to receive an overview of services and budget arrangements/pressures.
w/c 15.12.14	Data familiarisation
w/c 12.01.15	Members to meet with frontline staff and service users
w/c 19.01.15	Members to meet with frontline staff and service users
w/c 26.01.15	Members to visit neighbouring Authority to discuss processes in relation to Fostering and Adoption
w/c 02.02.15	Members to draw together findings and draft final report
24.02.15	Final Report to Scrutiny Panel
18.03.15	Final Report to Cabinet