

## **Draft Scoping Report**

### **Proposed Topic Review: How can the Timescale for Adoption at Derby City Council be improved?**

#### **Background**

At its meeting on 22 January the Children and Young People Commission discussed their topic review choice for the municipal year 2011/12. After a lengthy debate, the Commission chose to look at 'How can the Timescale for Adoption at Derby City Council be improved?'

The Commission agreed that the work would be carried out across the full Commission and the Corporate Parenting Sub-Commission's work programmes to reduce the demand on Member's time and to ensure the work is completed by the end of the Municipality Year.

#### **The Review**

Members were concerned about the increasing numbers of children in care. Foremost it was recognised that adoption provided children with a secure loving family which was felt most beneficial to the child's life chances. Additionally, reducing the number of Children in Council Care would reduce the highly significant costs to the Council.

#### **Aims and Objectives of the Review**

The Commission had two central aims for the review

##### **Aims of the review**

1. To establish whether the timescales for adoption can be reduced
2. To ensure that this would have a positive impact upon the children cared for by Derby City Council

The Commission believe that any time which could be saved by shortening the timescales for adoption would have positive outcomes for the Child, the adoptive parent and the Council.

The Commission want to ensure that any recommendations that may be made to improve timescales would have a positive impact on the child as this is of paramount importance.

##### **The objectives of the review**

1. To establish the current timescales for adoption
2. To examine where time savings could be made
3. To examine best practice in other Local Authorities
4. To explore the benefits of shortening adoption timescales
5. To explore whether there are disadvantages in shortening timescales for adoption

6. If possible, to consider any government recommendations regarding adoption timescales (Due to be released March 2012)
7. To establish whether there are sufficient resources to keep timescales as tight as possible.
8. To make recommendations to the Council Cabinet regarding adoption timescales

## **Proposed methodology**

The Commission will consider written and oral information in gathering evidence for the review.

## **Witnesses**

It is suggested that the Commission calls the following witnesses

- Lead officers from CYP who handle the adoption process
- A Social worker
- An adoptive parent
- A foster carer who has gone on to adopt the fostered child
- A representative from Harrow Council and its Partner Coram to talk through their adoption process (highlighted as best practice)
- A representative of Adoption UK or other representative body

## **What evidence do we need to gather?**

- **Policies and Strategies**
  - All policies and practices for Derby City Council on adoption
  - Details of statutory obligations for adoption process
  - Adoptive parent application forms
  - Timelines for adoption process
  - Details of social worker workloads
- **Policies and practices in other local authorities**
  - Examples of best practice
- **Other information**
  - Adoption league tables
  - Performance details for Derby City Council on adoption
  - Government review of adoption process details

## Timing and Timescales for the Review

The Commission will aim to work to the following timescales.

14 February	Corporate Parenting Sub Commission to amend/approve scoping report
Early March	Background information packs to the Commission
20 March	Children and Young People Commission – agree to delegate sign off recommendations to chair/vice chair and chair of sub-commission (?)
End March	Witness interviews
Early April	Write report Determine recommendations
17 April	Recommendations and final report to Cabinet

## Demands on Overview and Scrutiny Members

Commission Members will have to dedicate approximately the following amount of time to the review:

Reading background information packs – half day

Witness interviews – day

Writing recommendations – half day