

Corporate Parenting Panel

19 October 2018



Early Permanence Strategy

Report of Karen Robb, Strategic Manager, Looked After Children and Permanence, Durham County Council

Purpose of the Report

- 1 This report presents Corporate Parenting Panel with an overview of the Children and Young People's Services Early Permanence Planning Strategy 2018-20, which is attached as Appendix 2.

Background

- 2 The primary focus of permanency planning is to prevent children drifting within looked after arrangements and provides an underpinning framework for all social work with children, young people and their families.
- 3 Durham County Council, is committed as a corporate parent, and works diligently to find permanent, safe homes for children in care, which meet their specific needs, in a timely manner.
- 4 The care provided involves giving children security, stability and love through their childhood and beyond to ensure they achieve the best possible outcomes.

Permanency Planning

- 5 Permanence is the long term plan for the child's upbringing and provides an underpinning framework for all social work with children and their families, ranging from family support through to adoption. It ensures a framework of emotional, physical and legal conditions that gives a child a sense of security, continuity, commitment, identity and belonging.
- 6 Details of the principles that underpin permanency for a child or young person are provided in section 3 of the strategy (Appendix 2).
- 7 There are a number of commitments Durham County Council will strive to deliver, including timely assessments, clear plans and the opportunity for the 'voice of the child' to be included in the plans to ensure their views and feelings are captured. Further details of the commitments are provided in section 4 of the strategy (Appendix 2).
- 8 Section 5 of the strategy (Appendix 2) outlines 5 key areas which permanency planning must include.

9 Where it is safe to do so, Durham County Council will always look to provide high quality support and intervention to enable children to remain living with their family. Where this is not possible, there are various options to consider, including:

- Reunification/Staying at Home
- Placements with Family and Friends Carers
- Early Permanence Placements / Fostering for Adoption
- Special Guardianship (SGO)
- Child Arrangements Orders (LAD)
- Permanence in Foster Care and in Long Term Foster Care
- Long Term Residential Care
- Adoption

A summary of each permanence option and information about the available support, financial assistance and available legal orders regarding each option are provided in section 6 of the strategy (Appendix 2).

10 The strategy also alludes to good practice guidance and issues for consideration when undertaking permanency planning.

Recommendations

11 Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are recommended to:

- (a) Note the content of this report;
- (b) Receive the Early Permanence Planning Strategy 2018-20, attached as Appendix 2

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Appendix 1: Implications

Finance – The financial implications are significant and have impacted on the LAC budget.

Staffing – Not applicable

Risk – The number of Looked After Children remains at historically high levels and has increased significantly from 2015

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty – The strategy aims to safeguard vulnerable children and young people

Accommodation – Not applicable

Crime and Disorder – Not applicable

Human Rights– Not applicable

Consultation – Not applicable

Procurement – Not applicable

Disability Issues – The services provided to children with a disability are a consideration across all LAC services

Legal Implications – The Early Permanence Planning Strategy has been prepared in line with statutory requirements.