

## Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

### Court judgements relating to children and families Task and Finish Group – Scoping Document

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| Title of review                              | Court judgements relating to children and families   |
| Scope  |  |
| Reason for enquiry                           | Two judgements by the High Court in December 2018 found that there had been historic failures in Herefordshire Councils in respect to two recent adoption cases and relating to the revocation of a longstanding placement order.  |
| Links to the corporate plan                  | <p>The review contributes to the following objectives contained in the Herefordshire corporate plan and other key plans and strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep children and young people safe and give them a great start in life; and</li> <li>• Secure better services, quality of life and value for money.</li> </ul>   |
| Summary of the review and terms of reference | <p>Summary:</p> <p>The review will look at adoption processes and placement orders and the arrangements in place to ensure their appropriate use. The work will include reflections on cases and current practice.</p> <p><b>Terms of Reference:</b></p> <p>The task and finish group will conduct three meetings which will be held in quick succession. The meetings will be scheduled to enable the task and finish group to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• develop an understanding of adoption processes and placement orders (Meeting 1);</li> <li>• understand the judgements of the high court and how they are being addressed (Meeting 1);</li> <li>• learn what new measures are in place (for example, the introduction of the sibling separation tool; changes advocated by Doncaster Children's Trust in respect to the IROs Service and strengthened reporting measures in MOSAIC) to ensure the appropriate use of adoption processes and placement orders is consistently applied (Meeting 1)</li> <li>• examine how the wider corporate culture changes (such as the recently strengthened whistle blowing policy and our corporate parenting practices) are aiming to positively influence working practices and culture change within children's service (Meeting 2)</li> <li>• assess the robustness of the processes in place to quality assure case management (Meeting 2); and</li> <li>• look at current case studies to ensure processes are being observed and processes and orders appropriately applied (Meeting 3)</li> <li>• consider how members could be part of a quality assurance process in terms of future case management (Meeting 3)</li> </ul> |

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|                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>consider ways in which the voice of the child is being heard (having regard for the age and understanding of the child(ren) in connection to adoption and placement cases) and what improvements could be made (Meeting 3).</li> </ul> <p>Membership:</p> <p><i>To be confirmed at the Children and Young People Scrutiny committee on 4 February 2019.</i></p>   |
| What will NOT be included     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evaluation of the actions of any individual officer at the council under historical admission to care arrangements.</li> </ul>  |
| Potential outcomes            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To gain assurance that effective processes are in place to ensure the appropriate use of adoption processes and placement orders.</li> <li>More consistent use of children's and young people scrutiny in assessing performance and reporting on progress being made to strengthen current practices and culture around adoption and placement services</li> </ul>  |
| Key Questions                 | <p>To consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are adoption processes and placements orders and when should they be used;</li> <li>What processes manage the appropriate use of adoption processes and placement orders;</li> <li>Are the processes being observed and orders appropriately applied? And,</li> <li>What training and staff development is underway to ensure that all staff dealing with adoption/placement cases have the appropriate skills and experience</li> </ul> |
| Cabinet Member                | Cabinet member – Children and Families   |
| Key stakeholders / Consultees | Internal – Children and Families officers concerned with care arrangements for looked after children and legal officers.   |
| Potential witnesses           | Colleagues from Doncaster LA   |
| Research Required             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cataloguing changes to working practices that are now in place, or are being brought in, following the court judgements</li> <li>Assessing how these practices are being applied in the work environments</li> <li>Outcomes of audits and case studies to present to the task and finish group.</li> </ul>  |
| Potential Visits              | None   |
| Publicity Requirements        | Following the conclusion of the task and finish group to report back to the children and young people scrutiny committee.  |

Outline Timetable (following decision by the children and young people scrutiny committee to commission the Review)

| Activity | Timescale |
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| Confirm approach, Terms of Reference, programme of consultation/research/provisional witnesses/meeting dates  | Committee meeting – 4 February 2019 |
| <b>Meeting 1</b><br>Develop an understanding of adoption processes and placement orders; understand the judgements of the high court and how they are being addressed; and learn what new measures are in place to ensure the appropriate use of adoption processes and placement orders is consistently applied.   | February 2019                       |
| <b>Meeting 2</b><br>Examine how the wider corporate culture changes are aiming to positively influence working practices and culture change within children's services; and assess the robustness of the processes in place to quality assure case management.  | February 2019                       |
| <b>Meeting 3</b><br>Look at current case studies to ensure processes are being observed and processes/orders appropriately applied; consider how members could be part of a quality assurance process in terms of future case management; and consider ways in which the voice of the child is being heard and what improvements could be made.<br>Prepare Recommendations to scrutiny committee. | February 2019                       |
| Present final report to Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee  | 4 March 2019                        |

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| Group Members    |                      |
| Chair            | Cllr Carole Gandy    |
| Support Members  |                      |
|                  |                      |
|                  |                      |
| Support Officers | J Coleman<br>M Evans |
|                  |                      |
|                  |                      |