

Record of officer decision

Decision title:	Special guardianship support service.
Date of decision:	29 April 2019
Decision maker:	Director for Children's & Families
Authority for delegated decision:	Line 24 of the chief executive's scheme of delegation to the director for children's wellbeing and is in line with Herefordshire Council's Contract Procedure Rules.
Ward:	All Wards
Consultation:	Prospective Special guardianship order (SGO) carers have been consulted with in respect of their needs and reasons for any reluctance to apply which include lack of access to out of hours support.
Decision made:	Award a contract to Family Action for the provision of Special Guardianship support service for a period of 12 months at a total cost of £4,500 plus VAT. Funding has been identified within Safeguarding contract budget.
Reasons for decision:	<p>Herefordshire's current numbers of looked after children is too high and reducing this number is a key priority within the Corporate Parenting strategy and the Medium term financial strategy (MTFS). Children who are in secure and stable long term placements with extended family or general foster carers do not always benefit from remaining looked after and many could be cared for appropriately under a Special guardianship order (SGO).</p> <p>Many foster carers are reluctant to apply for a Special guardianship order and one of their main concerns is the availability of support that is comparable to that they receive as foster carers, particularly out of hours.</p> <p>The Special guardianship support service provides access to a secure website with advice and support, webchat and telephone helpline and is available 7 days a week out of hours.</p> <p>Subscription to the service for a further year is in line with contract procedure rules due to the low cost and the specialism of the service. It will however be reviewed in the next 12 months to ensure no alternative support provision may deliver the outcomes required.</p>
Highlight any associated risks/finance/legal/equality considerations:	The financial risk is low given the identified cost of the service. The impact and value of the service will be evaluated during the first year to identify whether it is providing value for money in reducing our number of looked after children. No other risks have been identified.
Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:	Do nothing – concerns of prospective SGO carers are not fully addressed which reduces chances of achieving LAC reduction strategy. No alternative services available at this time that meet this need. Impact of service to be reviewed on a 12-month basis to establish viability of committing long term.
Details of any declarations of interest made:	None

Signed

Date: 29 April 2019