



Portfolio Holder Decision  
Making Session and date/time

21<sup>st</sup> July 2015

10-11am

Item

**2**

Public

## PERMANENCE FINANCE POLICY

**Responsible Officer** Tina Russell Head of Social Work and Safeguarding  
Email: Tina.russell@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 254254 Fax:

---

### 1. Summary

- 1.1 The Permanency Finance Policy needs to be seen in the wider context of our LAC strategy which aims to that:
  - Where necessary children will come into local authority care to keep them safe
  - We will progress our assessments and care planning to permanency without undue delay
  - We will promote permanency in family care including reunification where it is safe and in the child's best interest to do so.
- 1.2 Special Guardianship (SGO), Child Arrangement (CA) Orders and Adoption Orders are permanency care options that can be provided to a child who cannot reside in parental care. They provide a legally secure foundation for building a permanent relationship between the child and their carer. In the case of SGO and CA they can preserve the legal link between the child and their birth family.
- 1.3 Permanence affords a child stability and security in the knowledge that they are in the care of someone who has put themselves forward via a legal order to care for them throughout their childhood. This allows them to flourish in families without being a "child in care" and without ongoing local authority overview or intervention. The use of SGOs where identified as an appropriate permanency option is being championed by the IROs, Children's Placement Service and Case Management Social Workers.
- 1.4 The LA has a duty to assess the support any prospective carer needs to enable them to provide the consistent good quality care the child needs. Support can include counselling, advice, practical support and financial support. This policy includes a review mechanism to ensure the carer is getting the support needed.
- 1.5 Whilst we recognise that in cases support is required in managing birth parent/child relations and contact the management of this in the long term should be something a carer is able to take responsibility for in the interests of the child. This role and responsibility is key to their ability as a carer to the child. Our Foster Care Training and Support Strategy 2015 includes training for carers in the management of contact and annual SGO support forums.

- 1.6 The Special Guardianship Regulations 2005 set out the circumstances in which financial support is payable and the considerations that a local authority must have regard to when deciding on the amount of that financial support. These Regulations have been further clarified by way of case law, in particular the case of R (TT) v London Borough of Merton [2012].
- 1.7 The attached policy sets out how Shropshire will undertake its duty and responsibilities to assess the needs and financial support required by those making Special Guardianship, Adoption and or Child Arrangement Order applications.

## **2. Recommendations**

That the portfolio holder approves this policy and its implementation.

## **3. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal**

- 3.1 As part of a three year analysis of our LAC population undertaken in early 13/14 we identified a large number of very young children who had been placed in foster care and in friends and family foster care as a permanency plan. For these children this means being a child in care for almost all of their childhood.
- 3.2 Looked After Children require regular intervention and review from the social work and independent review service which can be both intrusive and can promote dependency on the LA. Being a child in care for this extensive period can impact negatively on the child's feelings of security as they are "in LA care" as opposed to being in the care of an adult/family.
- 3.3 A major contributor to these permanency arrangements being agreed was the need for carers to have financial support to enable them to care for the child/ren.
- 3.4 This policy sets out how we as a LA will support the carer in these permanency arrangements financially enabling them to provide long term good quality care but without the child having to remain a LAC through their lives.
- 3.5 Work has been undertaken with the exiting LAC cohort to look at where cases can move to SGO and the culture of practice to see SGO/CA orders as permanency options in the initial stages of care planning

## **4. Financial Implications**

- 4.1 As outlined in the Permanency Finance Policy, there are a number of routes to achieve permanence including through the granting of an Adoption Order, a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) or a Child Arrangement Order (CAO) through the courts however not all Adoptions, SGOs and CAOs require ongoing financial assistance. Each case is assessed and means tested in line with the exiting and revised policy.
- 4.2 In Shropshire we currently have 16 SGO cases and 4 Child Arrangement cases that we provide financial assistance to. We don't provide financial assistance to any Adoption cases at this time.

- 4.3 The average cost to the LA of a single SGO is £7,125 per annum. The cost of a child being in the care of the LA far exceeds this cost when calculating social work time, IRO time and the time contribution of all agencies implementing the care plan.
- 4.4 The current annual cost of SGO financial contribution is £113,998 and the current annual cost of CA order financial contribution is £7,605

## 5. Background

None

## 6. Additional Information

Legal and children's finance representatives have been consulted in the review of this policy.

## 7. Conclusions

In social work terms we are increasing the number of children exiting local authority care into SGO arrangements. This results in a reduced overall financial cost to the local authority as well as providing the children with long term stable and secure attachments to family carers.

<p><b>List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information):</b></p>
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

<p><b>Key Decision: Yes</b></p>
---------------------------------

<p><b>Included within Forward Plan: Yes/No</b></p>
----------------------------------------------------

<p><b>If a Key Decision and not included in the Forward Plan have the General Exception or Special Urgency Procedures been complied with: Yes/No</b></p>
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

<p><b>Name and Portfolio of Executive Member responsible for this area of responsibility:</b></p>
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

<p>Ann Hartley</p>
--------------------

<p><b>Local Member:</b></p>
-----------------------------

<p><b>Appendices:</b></p>
---------------------------

**Declaration of Interest**

- I have no interest to declare in respect of this report

Signed ..... Date .....

NAME: .....

PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR: .....

- I have to declare an interest in respect of this report

Signed ..... Date .....

NAME: .....

PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR: .....

(Note: If you have an interest you should seek advice as to whether it is appropriate to make a decision in relation to this matter.)

For the reasons set out in the report, I agree the recommendation(s) in the report entitled .....

Signed .....

Portfolio Holder for .....

Date .....

If you have any additional comment which you would want actioned in connection with your decision you should discuss this with the report author and then set out your comment below before the report and pro-forma is returned to Democratic Services for processing.

Additional comment : .....

.....

.....

Note: If you do not wish to approve the recommendations, or wish to make an alternative decision, it is important that you consult the report author, Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Chief Executive and the Head of Finance, Governance and Assurance (S151 Officer) and, if there are staffing implications the Head of Human Resources (or their representatives) so that (1) you can be made aware of any further relevant considerations that you should take into account before making the decision and (2) your reasons for the decision can be properly identified and recorded, as required by law.

Note to Portfolio Holder: Your decision will now be published and communicated to all Members of Council. If the decision falls within the criteria for call-in, it will not be implemented until five working days have elapsed from publication.