

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Report

Committee/Panel:	Children And Families Advisory Panel
Date:	30 September 2014
Title:	Hampshire Adoption Services Annual Activity Report 2013-2014
Reference:	6026
Report From:	Director of Children's Services

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1. Summary

- 1.1 This is the annual report of the Adoption and Integrated Recruitment Service and is compiled under the National Minimum Standards 2013 (Standard 25.6) and the Care Standards Act. The report is to inform Hampshire County Council's Children and Families Advisory Panel of the management and outcomes of the Adoption Agency from 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014.

2. Contextual information

- 2.1 The County Adoption and Integrated Recruitment Service comprises of a Service Manager, Recruitment Team (integrated with fostering), Adoption Assessment Team, Panel Advisory Service, 2 Adoption Child Care Teams (East and West) and a county wide Adoption Support Team.
- 2.2 During October 2013, the Fostering Assessment Team was re-incorporated into the Family Placement Service and is now managed by the County Service Manager Integrated Placements to help streamline the service for foster carers.
- 2.3 The teams manage a range of services and resources to support prospective adopters, families who have adopted, children who need adoptive families and adults who have been adopted as a child.
- 2.4 List of services provided by the Adoption and Integrated Recruitment Service:
- Recruitment of prospective adopters
 - Preparation and assessment of prospective adopters
 - Support and family finding for children whose plan is adoption
 - Supporting children and their adoptive families following placement
 - Post adoption advice and support for adoptive families and children

Oversight and support of contact arrangements between adopted children and their birth families

Advice, support and counselling to adopted adults seeking access to their birth records

Support/counselling to birth relatives seeking contact with an adopted relative

3. Legislative Changes from 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014

- 3.1 Hampshire has implemented new regulations issued by the government on 1 July 2013 introduced a new two stage approval process for prospective adopters.
- 3.2 Stage 1 is a pre-assessment stage during which checks and references for prospective adopters are undertaken and applicants complete e-learning about adoption issues.
- 3.3 A decision is then taken by both the prospective adopters and the adoption service whether to proceed to Stage 2.
- 3.4 During Stage 2 prospective adopters undergo a more in-depth assessment process culminating in a recommendation by the Adoption Panel being made on their suitability to adopt. The final decision is made by the Agency Decision Maker.
- 3.5 The two stage process should be completed within 6 months of an application being accepted, although prospective adopters can take up to a six-month break between the two stages if they wish.
- 3.6 A new 26 week time limit has been introduced for care proceedings as a result of the government's reform of the Family Justice System. The aim is to reduce the length of children's care proceedings.
- 3.7 A new dedicated national information service (First4Adoption) has been established for people interested in adopting a child in England. In addition to providing information for prospective adopters, First4Adoption can help signpost adopters to suitable agencies for assessment.
- 3.8 Further adoption reform is taking place during 2014 when the Children and Families Bill (2013) becomes law.
- 3.9 A new adoption leadership board is being set up to support local authorities with the reforms in the Children and Families Bill and help adoption agencies recruit more adoptive families.
- 3.10 During February 2014, the government issued a consultation document seeking views on amendments to statutory guidance and regulations about:-
 - Fostering for Adoption

- Ethnicity when matching children with prospective adopters
- A duty to ensure adopters are given information about adoption support services
- The Adoption and Children Act Register
- Contact in respect of children in care and adopted children.

The new guidance came into effect in July 2014

4. Performance - Children:

CHILDREN	April 2013- March 2014	April 2012 – March 2013
No of Children subject to Adoption Orders:	56	62
No of Children with plans for Adoption: <i>*includes one child re-referred to the ADM from previous year</i>	111*	95
No of Children who had plans for adoption rescinded:	9	20
No of Children Matched:	78	76
No of Disruptions pre-adoption order	8	9

4.1 At the end of the year 2013-14, 56 adoption orders were made (compared with 62 for the same time period last year). A number of adoption hearings took place in March 2014 with final hearings due to take place at the beginning of the new financial year. It is therefore expected that the number of adoption orders will increase next year.

4.2 The number of children’s plans for adoption has increased compared to the same period last year, with 111 children who have plans for adoption (including one child’s plan re-referred for an agency decision from the previous year). The figure for the same period last year was 95 children, so this is an increase of 16 children.

4.3 Breakdown of profile of children with new plans for adoption 2013-14

Breakdown of profile of children with new plans for adoption April 2013 - March 2014	
Single male children:	29
Single female children:	34
Sibling pairs:	15 <i>(7 Male, 4 female, 4 mixed)</i>

Sibling group of 3:	5 (mixed)
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4.4 Ethnicity of children with new plans for adoption 2013-14

Ethnicity of Children with new Plans for Adoption 2013-14 (Total Number of children: 110)	
White British	89
Mixed: White & Black African	3
Mixed: White & Black Caribbean	1
Mixed: White & Asian	1
Mixed: Other	7
Black Other	1
Other Ethnic Group	1
Not known (refused/unable to provide):	7

- 4.5 Nine children have had their plans for adoption rescinded. In two cases the courts did not make Placement Orders. Prospective adopters could not be found for two sibling groups of three children or for five children with special needs. In another case the child's needs changed after placement (sadly leading to placement breakdown) and for two children they expressed a wish not to be placed for adoption.
- 4.6 Over the year 2013-14 78 children have been matched or placed for adoption (in comparison with 76 children the previous year). Sadly, 3 disrupted post placement and one during introductions.
- 4.7 Of these 78 children who have been linked this year 31 were linked with 26 sets of adopters from other adoption agencies (this compares with 7 children who were linked with 6 sets of adopters from other agencies the previous year).
- 4.8 Eleven children were linked with their foster carers (9 sets of foster carers). One set of foster carers had been dually approved as adopter/foster carers and were able to accept an early placement of a child whose plan was adoption.
- 4.9 Of the 110 children who have had new plans for adoption agreed since 1 April 2013, four of the children were relinquished for adoption.

4.10 Breakdown of profile of children placed for adoption April 2013-March 2014

Breakdown of profile of children placed for adoption April 2013-March 2014							
Single male children:							24
Single female children:							29
Sibling pairs:							11 (10 mixed m/f & 1 female)
Sibling group of 3:							1 (mixed)
Age at matching:	0-12 months	1-2	2-3	3-4	4-5	5+	TOTAL
	24	22	7	9	5	11	78

4.11 On 31 March 2014, there were 79 children waiting to be matched with adoptive families: of these approximately 34 have had prospective adopters identified and were linked in the first few months of the new financial year.

4.12 In total, at the end of March 2014, there were 39 children in a position to be matched with adoptive families but had no identified placement. These children continue to be the subject of vigorous family finding which includes being featured at profile events held by Hampshire Adoption Agency, the Adoption Consortium and external events hosted by the National Adoption Register.

4.13 There are currently over 40 sets of prospective adopters in assessment within Hampshire's adoption service compared to 18 assessments which were on going at the end of the previous year. The increase in numbers of prospective adopters is very welcome giving more potential resources for future matchings of children and allowing a greater degree of choice of types of families for social workers seeking adoptive placements for children.

4.14 Sadly, during 2013-14, there were 8 children whose (five) adoptive placements disrupted prior to the making of an adoption order. This included a sibling group of 3 children, a sibling pair and three single children. All of these children were subsequently placed in foster care. The sibling pair returned to their previous foster carer and one of the single children was able to remain within the wider adoptive family under fostering regulations. The sibling group of 3 children are being matched with previous foster carers who have now come forward to adopt them. Disruption meetings were held in each case. The information gathered from these meetings will inform future planning for the children and practice.

4.15 Timescales For Children Who Have Been Adopted

TIMESCALES FOR CHILDREN WHO HAVE BEEN ADOPTED BETWEEN 1 April 2013 and 31 March 2014		
	1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014 (Total no adopted: 56)	1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013 (Total no adopted: 62)
From entry into care to being placed with adopters within 18 months	30	27
From time of Placement Order to match agreed within 6 months	33	36

5. Adoption Scorecard (3 year average: 2010-2013)

- 5.1 Adoption Scorecards were introduced by the government as part of a new approach to tackle delays in the adoption system. The scorecard allows local authorities and other agencies to monitor their performance and compare it with others. The last scorecard was published by the Department for Education in January 2014.
- 5.2 Hampshire Adoption Agency predicted that the scorecard would show increased activity but slower timescales given that we have deliberately targeted the more difficult to place children, including sibling groups. The average time for indicators 2 and 3 below between 2010 and 2013 is longer than in 2009-12 (shown below in brackets)

	Indicators	Hampshire	England
1.	Percentage of children who wait less than 20 months between entering care & moving in with their adoptive family	58%	55%
2.	Average time between a LA receiving court authority to place a child and the LA deciding on a match to an adoptive family (days) (Current target: 6 months)	192 (163)	210 (171)
3	Average time between child entering care and moving in with adoptive family: For children who have been adopted (days) (Current target: 20 months)	599 (540)	647 (625)

- 5.3 The current scorecards show that nationally there has been no improvement

in timeliness since 2009-2012. Only 36 authorities met both thresholds indicators 2 and 3 and 65 authorities failed to meet both thresholds.

- 5.4 Hampshire met threshold indicator 3.
- 5.5 The adoption journeys and the timescales of children and prospective adopters are tracked and discussed at a monthly Adoption Monitoring Meeting attended by managers within the adoption service.

6. Performance - Adopters:

ADOPTERS	April 2013 - March 2014	April 2012 - March 2013
No of enquiries	485	234
No of adopters approved	39	52
No of adopters purchased inter-agency	26	6
No of Hants adopters sold/matched with Children from other agencies	5	4
No of Adopters referred to the IRM	1	0

6.1 No of enquiries during the year

RECRUITMENT	Enquiries 01 April – 30 September 2013					
	April	May	June	July	August	Sept
Number of enquiries:	30	20	16	27	31	45
Comparison with 2012:	32	17	13	10	17	21

	Enquiries 01 October 2013 - 31 March 2014					
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March
Number of enquiries:	34	69	38	87	45	42
Comparison with 2012:	15	19	10	31	24	25

- 6.2 Between April 2013 and March 2014 the recruitment team dealt with 485 enquiries: 169 in the first six months (an increase of 59 enquiries for the same period last year) and 316 in the second six months (an increase of 192 enquiries for the same period the previous year)
- 6.3 During April, May and June 2013 the focus was on recruiting applicants who had child care experience above and beyond caring for children in their own families. Previously recruitment had been targeted at applicants who could care for large sibling groups and this impacted on the numbers of enquiries and conversion rates.
- 6.4 Regular Information Sessions are held for invited members of the public who have enquired about adoption and want to hear more information. These sessions are held every two weeks.

- 6.5 Between April 2013 and March 2014 a total of 132 sets of prospective adopters attended Information Sessions.
- 6.6 A total of 111 sets of applicants were forwarded to the Adoption Assessment Team for assessment as prospective adopters.
- 6.7 Many potential applicants either decide, or may be advised not to progress their application. Common reasons for this are shortage of space, lack of child care experience and too recent infertility treatment or miscarriage.
- 6.8 Between April 2013 and March 2014 the assessment team completed 44 adopter assessments which were referred to adoption panel. 39 were approved with 3 assessments awaiting an agency decision as at the end of March (having been referred to a panel that met late in March)
- 6.9 Two of the completed assessments did not recommend approval of the prospective adopters: one of these cases is being re-assessed by agreement between the agency and the prospective adopter and the other was referred by the prospective adopter to the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) which is described below. The IRM panel's recommendation supported that of Hampshire's Adoption Panel and agency decision maker in that it felt the prospective adopter was not suitable to adopt
- 6.10 Thirty nine prospective adopters were therefore approved during the year. This compares to a figure of 52 approved adopters for the previous year (2012-13) and falls far short of the target set for 2013-14 which was to approve 70 sets of prospective adopters. The low numbers reflect the fact that last year the adoption agency prioritised recruitment to meet the needs of those children already waiting for adoptive homes and those children who might be deemed to be hard to place due to their health needs, learning needs or because they needed to be placed with their siblings.
- 6.11 The lower numbers of prospective adopters approved in Hampshire during 2013-14 led to an increase in the numbers of Hampshire children being matched with adopters from other agencies, compared with the previous year.
- 6.12 The Independent Reviewing Mechanism (IRM) is an organisation set up by the government in April 2004. It gives adoptive applicants in England the option of applying to an independent body to review the adoption agency's decision (or 'qualifying determination') not to approve them as adopters. It is operated by the British Association for Adoption & Fostering (BAAF) on behalf of the Department of Education.
- 6.13 Between April and September 2013 all applications from prospective

adopters who were approved were completed under the old process with an 8 month timescale from acceptance of an application to recommendation of the adoption panel. Since 1 July 2013, when the new 2 Stage Process was introduced, the timescale decreased to 6 months from acceptance of a Registration of Interest Form to Agency Decision.

- 6.14 The average timescale for all 39 prospective adopters who were approved during the year was 8.9 months. This includes prospective adopters who were assessed both under the old process and the new 2 stage process (which was introduced on 1 July 2013).

AVERAGE TIMESCALES FOR APPROVAL OF PROSPECTIVE ADOPTERS	
1 April 2013 – 31 March 2014:	8.9 months
1 April 2012 – 31 March 2013:	8.7 months

- 6.15 A contract to increase the capacity of the Adoption Team by going out to tender for up to 40 assessments did not attract any interest. In light of this, a proposal to develop our own service by recruiting 4.5 additional social workers was agreed by our Children and Families Management Team. These staff will assist by assessing more potential adopters thus meeting the need of an increasing number of our children with a plan for adoption. It will also generate income for the agency through matches between Hampshire adopters and children from other adoption agencies. The impact will begin to be felt in the next few months.
- 6.16 At the end of March 2014 there were 32 sets of prospective adopters in Stage 1 and 33 sets of prospective adopters in Stage 2 of the adoption process.
- 6.17 Between April 2013 and March 2014, a total of 14 Step Parent Orders were made. This work is undertaken by the County Adoption Assessment Team.

7. Performance - Marketing

- 7.1 Advertising and printing have formed the bulk of the expenditure from the allocated budget for adoption and fostering, including the printing of family finding booklets. The overall budget was £435,000: included in this was £120,000 which was received from the government's Adoption Reform Grant.
- 7.2 During the year the Integrated Recruitment Team has:
- Updated the adoption website. The adoption homepage has been updated with a simple message to inform prospective adopters of Hampshire's current recruitment needs. The message reflects the changes in Hampshire's recruitment strategy and the importance and emphasis on meeting the needs of children requiring permanent placements.
 - Formed a campaign to raise the profile of Hampshire Adoption in Hampshire

and surrounding areas. During National Adoption Week in November 2013 the team had a stand each day at Winchester Library and there have been weekly recruitment stands at leisure centres and supermarkets during February and March.

- Started using social media to recruit.
- Increased its Family finding activity, with two in-house house profile events, attendance at three National Adoption Register Exchange Days and two Consortium family finding events and one Adoption Activity Day.

7.3 Since the decision to re-open our recruitment in March 2013 there has been a significant increase in enquiries, particularly in the second half of the year and in comparison with the previous year.

7.4 An on-line enquiry form has been available since the end of August 2013. It comes directly through to the Recruitment Duty Team allowing them to make contact promptly. The on-line enquiry form will allow more relevant information to be captured and help to show us where people are looking for information.

7.5 There has been a consistently high volume of interest in the adoption website page with an increased number of “hits” (people visiting the site).

8. Adoption Panel and Advisory Service

8.1 Hampshire Adoption Agency provides an advisory service which oversees the recruitment, training, management and administration of the Central List of Adoption Panel Members for Hampshire’s adoption panels. Hampshire has four core panels each meeting once a month at various locations throughout the county.

8.2 The panels met on 42 occasions during the year April 2013-March 2014. Each panel meets for half a day with an agenda containing up to 4 cases. Occasionally 5 cases can be referred, depending upon the complexity. Panels have been particularly busy during the last quarter of the financial year with one of the March panels meeting for a full day due to the demand for panel spaces at that particular time. Further all day and extra panels are planned for the coming year.

8.3 Hampshire currently has 31 persons on its Central List of Adoption Panel Members, including elected members who continue to support the work of the adoption agency. Following a presentation to elected members in August 2013 two new elected members have joined panel.

8.4 Panel members were offered 2 training sessions during the year. The first training session was a half day briefing in September 2013 on the government’s changes/proposed changes to adoption which was also attended by staff from the

adoption service. The second training session was a full day in February 2014 looking at the role of panels and panel members and formulating and asking questions.

- 8.5 All panel members are required to have an annual appraisal regarding their performance. These are normally carried out with the panel member either before or after the panel session.
- 8.6 Adoption panels are required to provide feedback to the agency on the quality of the reports presented to the panel. This includes whether the requirements of the Restrictions on the Preparation of Adoption Reports Regulations 2005 have been met (that children's and adopter's reports are only completed by registered and experienced social workers or student social workers who are supervised by registered and experienced social workers) and whether there is a thorough, rigorous, consistent and fair approach across the service in the assessment of whether a child should be placed for adoption, the suitability of prospective adopters and the proposed placement.
- 8.7 Panel members' views on the quality of the reports submitted are gathered at the beginning of each case on evaluation forms. These are sent to the presenting social worker's team manager. Presenting social workers are also encouraged to give written feedback to the panel which is shared with panel members and used to improve their performance.
- 8.8 The majority of reports presented to panel are considered to be of a good standard across the service.
- 8.9 Prospective adopters and presenting social workers are given evaluation sheets on which to provide feedback to the Panel/Agency on their experience at the Panel. This is shared with Panel Members at the following month's panel. Feedback is generally positive.

9. Adoption Support

<u>Adoption Support Service Activity between April 2013 and March 2014</u>
New Referrals: 292
Adoption Information Exchanges: 3100
Direct contact arrangements: 60
Number of open cases at end of March 2014: 269

- 9.1 The Adoption Support Team provides a range of support services required under the Adoption Support Regulations as well as a range of workshops and support groups for adoptive families, children and birth parents/family.
- 9.2 The Adoption Support Service has a number of contracts in place with

external agencies, including the Post Adoption Centre and Barnardos, for the provision of support to birth families and adoptive families. These contracts are due for renewal during 2014 and will be scrutinised for value for money and effectiveness.

- 9.3 All prospective adopters on approval are given a one-year membership of Adoption UK, a support group for adopters, which is paid for by Hampshire County Council.

10. Inter Country Adoptions

- 10.1 All inter country adoption assessments are carried out within a Service Level Agreement with Parents and Children Together (PACT) based in Reading. Hampshire has a statutory responsibility to undertake the welfare supervision of those children whose adoption orders made in their country of origin are not recognised in the UK and who therefore need to go through the adoption process in the UK.
- 10.2 There are currently 2 children from overseas placed with approved adopters in Hampshire where PACT are undertaking welfare supervision on behalf of Hampshire.

11. Adoption Consortium

- 11.1 Hampshire continues to be a member of the Adoption Consortium which includes Oxfordshire, Surrey and PACT (Parents and Children Together). It provides a forum in which to seek adoptive placements for children unable to be placed within county and a forum in which to discuss policy and practice issues.
- 11.2 The consortium (supported by BAAF) held an Adoption Activity Day in March 2014. This was a family finding opportunity to which children awaiting Adoptive families and prospective adopters were invited to enjoy a Disney themed event. Adopters were able to meet a range of children waiting to be adopted in a prepared, supported, safe and fun environment. The Activity Day was very successful for Hampshire's children. At the time of writing, of the 20 children who attended the day, adoptive families have been found for 9. A further Activity Day is planned for September 2014. The activity days are being financed from Adoption Reform Grant monies.
- 11.3 There have been discussions with a neighbouring consortium, the South Coast Consortium, looking at the possibility of merging the two consortia in the future. A piece of work to assess the costs, benefits and risk of a merger will be undertaken by an independent consultant during 2014-2015.

12. Adoption Reform Grant

12.1 During 2013-14 the government awarded grants to all local authorities to provide support towards their adoption services. The grants were paid in four instalments. Hampshire received £2,149,653 non-ring fenced monies and a one-off grant of £718,240 to be spent on adoption services with the purpose of increasing the supply of adopters and reducing the backlog of children waiting for adoption, particularly by developing innovative ways of finding adoptive families for children who wait longer than average to be adopted.

12.2 During 2013-14 the adoption service used its grant money to pay for:

- Independent assessors to complete prospective adopter reports
- Extra administrative staff to support the adoption service
- Adoption Activity Day (in partnership with the Adoption consortium and BAAF)
- Feasibility study into an enlarged consortium (shared costs)
- Training for adoption service staff
- Training for prospective/approved adopters
- Additional 4.5 qualified social work staff for the adoption assessment and recruitment teams to increase the number of prospective adopters
- Purchase of inter-agency adopters to prevent delay in placing children

13. Future Direction: Work Plan for 2014-15:

- To improve timescales for the new 2-stage process for the assessment of prospective adopters.
- To continue to respond to the new timescales for completion of care proceedings within 26 weeks in terms of achieving early placements.
- To manage the government's adoption change agenda including the integration of the new statutory guidance and regulations.
- Increase the number of prospective adopters (target 90) to meet the needs of children with a plan for adoption .
- To generate income by selling adopters surplus to our need to other adoption agencies.
- To build more efficient systems for the reporting of performance management information.
- To partake in further Activity Days to increase the chance of finding suitable adopters for our harder to place children.
- To consider the advantages of Hampshire's adoption consortium merging with the South Coast Adoption Consortium.
- To continue to develop our working relationship with the Isle of Wight Adoption Service and share good practice with them.
- To ensure that monies received through the Adoption Reform Grant for 2014-2015 are allocated effectively to meet our Adoption Agency's priorities and government legislation.

- To explore the feasibility of paperless adoption panels by using digital Technology.

14. Case Study

14.1 A case study is attached on page 14 (Appendix 1) which follows the journey of a Hampshire child who has been placed for adoption.

15. Recommendation

15.1 That this report is noted and approved by the Children and Families Advisory Panel.

Appendix 1 – Case Study

CASE STUDY: Bobby (child's name has been changed for confidentiality)

Bobby is now almost 5 years old and was recently placed with his adoptive family.

Bobby became known to Hampshire Children's Services Department when he was 9 months old. He was suffering from neglect. His birth mother was abusing alcohol and drugs and was struggling to deal with the demands of caring for a baby.

Bobby's birth father suffered from poor mental and physical health and was unable to care for him.

Although Bobby's birth mother successfully completed a residential detox programme, she was unable to maintain her alcohol and drugs free lifestyle and agreed that Bobby should come into the care of the Council. He was placed with foster carers.

There were no other family members able or willing to care for Bobby and he was made subject to a Care Order and Placement Order by the court when he was 3 years old.

Bobby's early trauma and mother's use of alcohol in pregnancy have resulted in his global development delay and emotional difficulties. He takes a long time to learn skills and finds new situations and new people frightening.

Fortunately Bobby has been in one stable foster placement during the time that he has been looked after. He is an engaging child who is affectionate to those he knows.

Family finding for an adoptive family for Bobby has been lengthy because there are limited families with the skills to manage his special needs and who are willing to accept the risks associated with his background.

We searched within Hampshire's own resources but there were no suitable prospective adopters for him.

Bobby's name was placed on the National Adoption Register and his profile was shared at Adoption Profile Events which are attended by prospective adopters seeking children.

Despite persistent attempts by his social worker and our Family Finding Team, we could not identify a family for Bobby. While there were many expressions of interest in Bobby, it appeared that prospective adopters withdrew their interest when they heard more about Bobby's difficulties and background.

However, this changed when Bobby attended an Adoption Activity Day supported by his foster carer and social worker. Bobby enjoyed the day and several families who saw him wanted to know more about him.

It was on that Activity Day that Bobby and his adoptive family established a rapport. Bobby remembered this family when he met them again and with careful preparation he later moved in with them.

Although Bobby will continue to need a great deal of support he has coped well with the move from his foster carer. He is currently enjoying the summer holidays with his new family and starts school in September.

CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:**Links to the Corporate Strategy**

Hampshire safer and more secure for all:	no
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Maximising well-being:	no
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Enhancing our quality of place:	no
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

DocumentLocation

None

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

1. Equality Duty

1.1. The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it.
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- a) The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant characteristic connected to that characteristic;
- b) Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- c) Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

Equalities Impact Assessment:

1.2 This will improve the life chances of children needing to be placed for adoption in Hampshire.

2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:

2.1 None.

3. Climate Change:

- a) How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption? N/A
- b) How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer term impacts? N/A