

## AGENDA

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**Meeting:** Children's Select Committee  
**Place:** Committee Room A - Council Offices, Monkton Park, Chippenham  
**Date:** Thursday 29 November 2012  
**Time:** 10.30 am

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Please direct any enquiries on this Agenda to Roger Bishton, of Democratic Services, County Hall, Bythesea Road, Trowbridge, direct line 01225 713035 or email [roger.bishton@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:roger.bishton@wiltshire.gov.uk)

Press enquiries to Communications on direct lines (01225) 713114/713115.

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### Membership:

Cllr Paul Darby	Cllr Jon Hubbard
Cllr Andrew Davis	Cllr David Jenkins
Cllr Peter Davis	Cllr Jacqui Lay (Vice Chairman)
Cllr Mary Douglas	Cllr Bill Moss
Cllr Peter Fuller	Cllr Sheila Parker
Cllr Mark Griffiths	Cllr Carole Soden (Chairman)
Cllr Russell Hawker	

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### Substitutes:

Cllr Christopher Devine	Cllr John Knight
Cllr Peggy Dow	Cllr Helen Osborn
Cllr Nick Fogg	Cllr Jeff Osborn
Cllr Mollie Groom	Cllr William Roberts
Cllr Tom James MBE	

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### Non-Elected Voting Members:

Rev Alice Kemp	Parent Governor Representative (SEN)
Mr Neil Owen	Parent Governor Representative (Secondary)
Mrs Rosheen Ryan	Parent Governor Representative (Primary)
Dr Mike Thompson	Clifton Diocesan RC Representative

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### Non-Elected Non-Voting Members:

Mrs Di Dale	Further Education Representative
Mrs Judith Finney	Primary School Headteacher Representative
Mr John Hawkins	School Teacher Representative
Kaylum House	Children & Young People's Representative

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## **PART I**

### **Items to be considered while the meeting is open to the public**

1 **Apologies**

2 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting** *(Pages 1 - 8)*

To approve and sign the minutes of the Children's Select Committee held on 27 September 2012.

3 **Declarations of Interest**

To receive any declarations of pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests or dispensations granted by the Standards Committee.

4 **Chairman's Announcements**

5 **Public Participation**

The Council welcomes contributions from members of the public.

#### **Statements**

If you would like to make a statement at this meeting on any item on this agenda, please register to do so at least 10 minutes prior to the meeting. Up to 3 speakers are permitted to speak for up to 3 minutes each on any agenda item. Please contact the officer named above for any further clarification.

#### **Questions**

To receive any questions from members of the public or members of the Council received in accordance with the constitution. Those wishing to ask questions are required to give notice of any such questions in writing to the officer named above no later than **5pm on Thursday 22 November 2012**. Please contact the officer named on the first page of this agenda for further advice. Questions may be asked without notice if the Chairman decides that the matter is urgent.

Details of any questions received will be circulated to Committee members prior to the meeting and made available at the meeting and on the Council's website.

6 **The Future Development of the Young People's Support Service (YPSS)**  
*(Pages 9 - 22)*

A report from Carolyn Godfrey, Corporate Director, providing an update on the Power To Innovate (PTI) project in Wiltshire is attached, as requested by the former Children's Services select Committee at its meeting in March 2012.

The Committee received a report proposing the closure of the Young People's Support Service (YPSS) in November 2011. The service had been placed in Special Measures in May 2011 and was subsequently closed in August 2011. In its place, Wiltshire used the Department for Education's (DfE) Power to Innovate (PTI) to delegate the responsibility for educating permanently excluded students to secondary schools, who receive the devolved funding.

Also attached is statistical information showing both temporary and permanent exclusions in primary and secondary schools for the school year 2011 – 2012.

Mark Brotherton, Head of Targeted School and Learner Support, will attend to answer members' questions.

7 **Adoption Agency Annual Report 2011-12** *(Pages 23 - 76)*

A report from Carolyn Godfrey, Corporate Director, in advance of the Adoption Agency Annual Report 2011-12 which will be considered by Cabinet on 22 January 2013, is attached.

It is a requirement that the Executive receives a report on the local authority's adoption agency to satisfy themselves that it is effective and is achieving good outcomes for children and/or service users. A preliminary report is provided for the Select Committee and members are invited to submit any comments or recommendations to Cabinet as appropriate.

In March 2012 Ofsted carried out an inspection of Wiltshire Council Safeguarding and Looked After Children's services. The subsequent report highlighted areas where the adoption service was found to be inadequate as well as areas where the service is both adequate and outstanding.

In May 2012 the Government published revised local authority Adoption Scorecards, and Wiltshire's performance in 2008/11 was below the national average for the number of days between a child first coming into care and moving in with their adoptive parent. This was received by the Select Committee.

In May 2012 the Council took part in a pilot for a diagnostic assessment developed to support local authorities to explore how delays in the adoption process can be minimised. Following this, an Adoptions Improvement Plan was put in place, and is now monitored by the Safeguarding Improvement Board which was set up to ensure improvements were made following the Ofsted inspection.

8 **Coalition Changes - Update September to November 2012** *(Pages 77 - 82)*

A report from Carolyn Godfrey, Corporate Director, on developments relating to children's services arising from the Coalition Government is attached.

The Committee is asked to consider the report and agree further action as appropriate.

9 **Task Group Update** (Pages 83 - 86)

Members are asked to note the updates on the following task group activity attached:

- Safeguarding Children and Young People Task Group
- Special Schools & Post-16 SEN Task Group
- Major Contracts Task Group

10 **Forward Work Programme** (Pages 87 - 88)

The Committee is asked to note the attached draft Forward Work Programme.

11 **Urgent Items**

Any other items of business which the Chairman agrees to consider as a matter of urgency.

12 **Date of Next Meeting**

To note that the next meeting will be held on Thursday 31 January 2013, starting at 10.30am, at the Council's Offices, Monkton Park, Chippenham.

**PART II**

**Items during whose consideration it is recommended that the public should be excluded because of the likelihood that exempt information would be disclosed**

None

## **CHILDREN'S SELECT COMMITTEE**

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### **DRAFT MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN'S SELECT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 27 SEPTEMBER 2012 AT COMMITTEE ROOMS A - C, MONKTON PARK, CHIPPENHAM.**

#### **Present:**

Cllr Paul Darby, Cllr Andrew Davis, Cllr Peter Fuller, Cllr Mark Griffiths, Mr J Hawkins, KaylumHouse, Rev. A Kemp, Cllr Jacqui Lay (Vice Chairman), Cllr Bill Moss, Cllr Helen Osborn (Substitute), Mr N Owen, Cllr Sheila Parker, Mrs R Ryan, Cllr Carole Soden (Chairman) and Dr M Thompson

#### **Also Present:**

Nicholas Breakwell, Mark Brotherton, Lynda Cox, Julia Cramp, Teresa Goddard, Cllr Lionel Grundy OBE, Paul Kelly, Cllr Laura Mayes, Henry Powell, Susan Tanner and Cllr Anthony Trotman

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#### **35 Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Peter Davis, Cllr Russell Hawker, Cllr Jon Hubbard (who was substituted by Cllr Helen Osborn) and Revd Alice Kemp.

#### **36 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

##### **Resolved:**

**To confirm and sign the minutes of the previous meeting held on 26 July 2012, subject to the recording of apologies received from Mr Neil Owen. .**

#### **37 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **38 Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman made the following announcements:-

- (1) Adult Education The Chairman reminded the meeting that at its meeting on 26 July 2012 this Select Committee considered a report on the Role

of Wiltshire Council in Informal Education at which the following two options were recommended:-

Option 2 – To facilitate the provision of informal adult education at a local level, and

Option 3 – To coordinate and promote informal adult learning opportunities offered across the County.

Subsequently, on 10 September 2012, cabinet agreed:-

- a) that the Council would adopt the role to facilitate the provision of informal adult education at a local level;
  - b) approve the appointment of a part-time adult education officer to work with local community networks to develop a sustainable locally-based adult education provision including information on, and promotion of, opportunities and
  - c) To allocate budget of £32,000 from the revenue savings accrued from the closure of Urchfont Manor College to meet the costs associated with the appointment.
- (2) Health Scrutiny Workshop The Chairman announced that the Health Select Committee would be running an afternoon workshop on 3 October 2012 at the Angel Hotel in Chippenham, starting at 1.30pm and a light lunch would be provided.

The workshop would be for all non-executive Members who wished to influence the health and social care agenda, and the key aim of the workshop would be to provide an opportunity for Members to hear from representatives across the health and social care arena and discuss matters of interest. In recognition of the increased responsibilities of the Council and the importance of this area of work, a number of senior representatives from the health sector would contribute to the afternoon as well as officers from within the Council. More details were available from Maggie McDonald, Senior Scrutiny Officer.

### 39 **Public Participation**

The Committee noted the rules on public participation and the manner in which the meeting would be held.

### 40 **Disabled Children and Adults (DCA) Pathfinder**

The Select Committee received a report by Carolyn Godfrey and Sue Redmond, Corporate Directors which provided an update on the Green Paper

*Support and Aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability and Wiltshire's approach to this as a pathfinder.*

It was explained that in 2011 work started on the disabled children and adults review aimed at giving more choice and control to children and families, ensuring the Council worked efficiently and improving the transition process from children to adult services. This review of the services for disabled children and adults was listed as a priority in the Business Plan 2011-2015.

At the same time, the government published a Green Paper proposing radical reforms to systems for identifying, assessing and supporting children and young people with disabilities or special educational needs. In September 2011 confirmation was received that Wiltshire was one of 20 local authorities selected to be a pathfinders for this Green Paper work. As the work of the DCA review and the requirements of the green paper were aligned, the two pieces of work were brought together and managed as the Disabled Children and Adults (DCA) Pathfinder.

In addition to this, it was explained that the recently published draft Care and Support Bill included provision to give local authorities powers to assess children for adult services. It also provided a new protection to ensure that children's services continued until the assessments and planning required for adult services had been completed, and support was ready to meet their needs, thus ensuring that there was no gap in care.

It was noted that as from September 2012, a proof of concept team had been testing the single assessment framework and plan, the single assessment process and a new role supporting this process, namely the SEND lead worker. Approximately 40 families would be approached to be involved in testing the assessment process and it was explained that they would be chosen from amongst children and young people reaching specific educational stages and also from amongst young families with a sudden change in circumstances. It was noted that this new procedure was popular with families especially as it resulted in a single assessment process.

Members questioned the robustness of the system for collecting data and it was noted that the Head of Performance Management & Co-ordination was working on this, especially the outcomes, the outputs being good.

**Resolved:**

- (1) **To note the contents of the report.**
- (2) **To request an update report at the March 2013 meeting of the Committee, to include details of progress in data management.**

#### 41 **Coalition Changes - July to September 2012**

The Committee received and noted a report by Carolyn Godfrey, Corporate Director, on developments relating to children's services arising from the Coalition Government.

Arising therefrom:

Literacy Catch-up Programme for Disadvantaged Pupils It was reported that the Government had set up a £10 million programme across England and Wales to help disadvantaged children who failed to reach the expected level in English and Maths by the end of their primary education (i.e. level 4 at Key Stage 2). Some projects would be fast-tracked through the bidding process to start with immediate effect and other projects would commence in 2013.

It was noted that good and robust transfer arrangements were in place to assist children transferring from primary to secondary school.

Members asked for information about the subjects available on offer in the English Baccalaureate which was increasingly becoming available to students in secondary schools. Officers stated that they intended to include details of this qualification when available in a future Coalition update report.

Project to re-engage NEET young people Members noted that funding up to £126 million was being made available to organisations across England, who would be paid by results to get 16 and 17 year old students back into education or training. The programme, which was part of the Government's Youth Contract, was the first to use payment by results to help to get NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training) re-engaged.

During discussion, Members of the Committee requested information about the providers available and also how much of the £126 million Wiltshire could expect to receive. The Service Director, Commissioning & Performance explained that Wiltshire was working with a wide range of providers and contracts, worth up to £2,200, were in place to help with support for vulnerable groups.

#### 42 **Executive response to the Final Report of the Special Schools and Post-16 SEN Task Group**

The Select Committee received a report which set out the response of the Cabinet Member for Children's Services to the report of the Special Schools and Post-16 SEN Task Group, which was endorsed by the Committee at its last meeting on 26 July 2012. The report also contained responses from Wiltshire NHS to recommendations 2, 3 and 10 which related to services commissioned by the Primary Care Trust (PCT). The Committee was invited to note the

Cabinet Member's response and decide any further action that needed to be taken.

During discussion the following points were made:-

- There was a general view that the level of service likely to be required in the future had been underestimated and that additional funding would be required especially with projected growths in population.
- A certain amount of concern was expressed at the level of some healthcare provision in schools, in particular the lack of training of some teaching staff to carry out certain procedures such as the changing and cleaning of tracheostomy tubes.
- Whilst Members were pleased to note the proposals for a new care home on land at the former Paddocks site, to replace the existing Larkrise School, Trowbridge, the need for additional land to increase current outdoor space was endorsed.
- Disappointment was expressed that no funding was available for an Eco-Learning Centre at Rowdeford School, Rowde.

It was noted that the Task Group would be reconvened to undertake further work, including:-

- (i) a visit to Wiltshire College's provision for post-16 learners with SEN.
- (ii) consideration of the identification of Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties (BSED) in primary school aged children.
- (iii) an investigation to identify out of County resources being used by Wiltshire.
- (iv) an examination of mainstream schools to identify the level of SEN provision they make.

After further discussion,

**Resolved:**

- (1) To note the response of the Cabinet member for Children's Services to the Task Group's report.**
- (2) To note that the Task Group would reconvene to undertake further work as requested by this Select Committee and would report its findings back to this Committee in due course.**

- (3) **To request the Task Group to also consider the responses provided by the Cabinet Member for Children's Services in detail and to receive the various pieces of further information offered with that response.**

**43 Report of the FE in the Salisbury Area Task Group: Concerns raised by Sarum Academy regarding the Task Group's final report**

Consideration was given to a report from the Further Education in the Salisbury Area Task Group, having considered the concerns raised by Sarum Academy regarding the Task Group's final report.

At its July meeting, the Children's Select Committee received the response of the Cabinet Member for Children's Services to the Task Group's final report. At this meeting, Ruth Johnson, Principal of Sarum Academy, raised a number of concerns about the report's circulation and its accuracy in regard to Sarum Academy. This Select Committee asked the Task Group to reconvene to consider the points raised and report back to the Committee at a later date. The Task Group met on 24 August 2012 and were joined by Ruth Johnson, Principal of Sarum Academy.

The Committee also received a copy of a letter dated 21 June to Carolyn Godfrey, Corporate Director from three of Sarum Academy's four sponsors setting out their areas of concern together with a response sent by Dr Mike Thompson, Chairman of the Task Group, dated 11 July.

After some discussion.

**Resolved:**

- (1) **To note the conclusions of the Further Education in the Salisbury Area Task Group and bring them to the attention of the Cabinet Member for Children's Services.**
- (2) **To thank Ruth Johnson, Principal of Sarum Academy, for attending the Task Group meeting on 24 August 2012 and for her engagement in the scrutiny process.**

**44 Task Group Update**

The Select Committee received an update on the activity of the following Task Groups:-

- Safeguarding Children & Young People Task Group
- Special School and Post-16 SEN Task Group

- Major Contracts Task Group

**Resolved:**

- (1) To note the contents of the report.
- (2) To note that the Major Contracts Task Group would be meeting in October, when Members would conduct their annual review of the Council's contract with the White Horse Education Partnership (WHEP).

45 **Forward Work Programme**

The Committee received the Forward Work Programme for consideration and comment, it being noted that this would be presented to the Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee for endorsement.

**Resolved:**

**To approve the Committee's Forward Work Programme and commend it to the Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee to be endorsed.**

46 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items of business.

47 **Date of Next Meeting**

**Resolved:**

**To note that the next meeting of this Committee would be held on Thursday 29 November 2012, starting at 10.30am at the Council's Offices, Monkton Park, Chippenham.**

(Duration of meeting: 10.30 am - 12.30 pm)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Roger Bishton, of Democratic Services, direct line 01225 713035, e-mail [roger.bishton@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:roger.bishton@wiltshire.gov.uk)

Press enquiries to Communications, direct line (01225) 713114/713115

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**Wiltshire Council**

**Children's Services Select Committee**  
**29 November 2012**

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## **The Future Development of the Young People's Support Service (YPSS)**

### **Purpose of Report**

1. This is an update report as requested by the Children's Services Select Committee in March 2012. This report contains the latest information on Wiltshire's development of the Department for Education's (DfE) Power to Innovate (PTI) and the development of the provision for those young people who were permanently excluded from their mainstream secondary school prior to the start of the PTI trial in May 2012. The closure of the Young People's Support Service (YPSS) in August 2012 followed the Cabinet decision in November 2011.

### **Background**

2. YPSS was placed in Special Measures in May 2011 by an Ofsted inspection and a decision to seek closure from the Secretary of State was submitted in January 2012. Agreement was reached in March 2012 and the YPSS service was closed from August 2012. A number of young people (28) remain the responsibility of the local authority as their permanent exclusions took place before the PTI came into force. Their provision is currently being organised by the Education Other Than at School (EOTAS) team through the two previous YPSS facilities, namely the Trinity Centre in Trowbridge and the John Ivie Centre in Salisbury.
3. The EOTAS provision for the retained young people is a closed service. There are no new referrals from secondary schools as the PTI has enabled schools to take full responsibility for the provision for those young people who would previously have been excluded and become the responsibility of the local authority.
4. Three former teachers from the YPSS service have been employed with six support workers and an outdoor specialist support worker. These staff have had their redundancies deferred for a year until August 2013. The service will then close completely in August 2013.
5. If the Government do not legislate for schools to continue to take responsibility for those they would previously have excluded, and schools themselves do not wish to retain their responsibilities then the local authority will revert to its

responsibility for excluded young people. At this point arrangements will be made to commission and procure, the range of personalised learning provision that currently exists.

6. The retained EOTAS service is due to receive a monitoring visit by OfSTED. The previous three visits have noted the progress that was being made by the service and satisfactory judgements were made. However the new OfSTED framework places greater emphasis on teaching and learning and the progress made by young people as well as the personalised learning packages that are in place.
7. The EOTAS service has made good efforts to maintain the progress set from the three previous visits. Attendance of young people at both Centres has improved. Teaching is more focused and learning more tailored to individual needs. Resources have been consolidated and used more effectively in learning particularly the use of technologies such as interactive white boards.
8. In relation to the provision made by schools to personalised learning (alternative provision, that has become their responsibility, the LA has established an accredited framework of alternative providers following an application and detailed scrutiny process. There are 34 private providers accredited on the current framework and the LA is currently in the process of a second round of applications that will be completed in the new year with additional providers expressing interest and being added. Schools in the North and West (federations) of the local authority decided at an early stage to utilise the money delegated to them individually. They use their finances to enhance preventative work through approaches such as, additional learning mentors or have on-site and/or off-site facilities which are specifically adapted to meet their young people's needs. Schools in the south of the local authority (Wessex federation) decided to pool their finances and purchase places through an organisation known as CfBT. CfBT have facilities in other local authorities such as Bristol and Bath and North East Somerset and educated young people with their own staff. They currently share half of the John Ivie Centre premises in Salisbury for young people on personalised learning packages. Our own EOTAS service utilises the other half for those young people we have retained.
9. Service Level Agreements for the use of the devolved finances have been signed by schools and focus on finances being used exclusively for those they identify as being in need of a personalised learning package. Two schools in particular are using the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) questionnaire to identify young people at a very early stage and put into place a range of approaches to ensure preventative work is in place. The NFER questionnaire has been designed alongside the DfE PTI to help evaluate the effects on young people, their parents/carers and schools and to report back to ministers on the trial.

10. A third meeting for those organisations providing personalised learning packages or Alternative Provision (AP) who are in our published catalogue of providers was held in October 2012 with presentations from schools. We have around 34 organisations who have signed up to our accreditation register. A further meeting is planned for February/March 2013

11. Although schools themselves have the responsibility for assuring the quality of any in-house provision and any external providers that they commission, the EOTAS team also monitor provision and make visits to sample the quality of provision being delivered by Alternative Providers.

### **Recommendations**

To note the update report.

**Carolyn Godfrey, Corporate Director**

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Report Author: Mark Brotherton, Head of Targeted School and Learner Support Schools and Learning, Tel ext 13835

### **Appendices**

Appendix A Provision for young people retained in the EOTAS Service.

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EOTAS Students Review linked to Providers.

At the beginning of Sept there were 29 students remaining on the role of EOTAS, since then one has moved out of the County another has been taken on the roll of the Farrington Centre. The remaining students all have a personalised curriculum which incorporates one or more providers.

One student has been added, a permanent exclusion from Sarum Academy.

Provider (Brief Description)	Number of students Involved with the provider.	% of curriculum	Attendance with provider	Reporting mechanism	Contact with provider	Comments
<b>CfBT</b> Fulltime provider of academic curriculum and support work.	5	100%	Very good	Written reports and oral feedback	Excellent. Regular contact to discuss students, referrals from schools and ongoing issues.	Contact particularly good as we share premises at John Ivie. Very good at managing difficulties.
<b>On Track</b> Fulltime provider of academic curriculum and support work.	1	100%	Attendance of this student is difficult but managed very well by On Track. Regular meetings	Excellent written reporting and copies of certificates sent to the student	Very well established, formal and informal contact.	On Track have over the years provided an excellent service for students.
<b>Kandu</b> Arts activities used to engage students in a wider curriculum	4 students in a group 1 student	1 afternoon  95%	Attendance is very good, often better than other parts of the curriculum	Oral	Phone and visits from EOTAS staff	Quite informal provider, mainly used for groups attending one session /week. Can also provide short term provision for very disaffected students.
<b>BTCV South</b> Conservation activities	1	20%	Good. Daily contact by text	Oral	Oral and visits.	An ongoing provision for 1 student that is proving to be very successful

<b><u>Provider</u></b>	Number of students	% of curriculum	Attendance	Reporting	Contact	Comment
<b><u>BTCV North</u></b> Conservation activities	3 students in a group	10%	A bit wobbly at first but improving. TA from EOTAS provides support	Orally after each session	Good, provider comes into the EOTAS centre after each session.	
<b><u>Body Tech</u></b> Boxing/gym	1 group boxing. 1 group girls gym	5% each	Variable due to nature of referrals. EOTAS TA support	Orally to TA then to EOTAS lead teacher	Phone and through support staff	Very good at engaging. Rigorous delivery
<b><u>Core Children's Services</u></b> Very personalised programmes to engage very challenging students who require intensive reengagement.	1 possibly 2 proposed programmes	Will be fulltime for 6 weeks				Very good at providing very bespoke short term programmes based around mentoring and addressing social issues that have a major impact on progress
<b><u>Develop Ltd, Salisbury</u></b> Photography	1 possibly student					GCSE photography offered, still to be put in place.
<b><u>First for Skills</u></b> Functional skills and employability Based in Chippenham/Salisbury	1 student fulltime. 5 part-time	Part-time varied from 10% to 40%	Good attendance	Oral	Good, orally and visits	Unfortunately closed at the end of Sept, students have been moved to other programmes
<b><u>Five Rivers Farringdon Centre</u></b> Fulltime placement offering academic, social and practical activities.	1 student part time	60%	Poor, difficult student	Written and oral	Good contact, well written reports and regular phone calls +visits from EOTAS staff	The programme for this student has completely broken down; he is now receiving a different programme.
<b><u>River Bourne Farm</u></b> General farming activities	2 students					Good programme but the 2 referrals did not engage so the initial referral was not followed up.

Provider	Students	% of curriculum	attendance	reporting	contact	comment
<b>Rowdeford</b> Horticultural activities	1	40%	Good	Written and oral	Regular oral contact	Good programme but the student attending found the group format difficult. He has dropped this activity with mutual consent.
<b>Springfield</b> Practical courses	2	5%/10%	Variable due to nature of the students	Written and oral	Regular oral contact	
<b>Princes Trust</b> Employability for yr 11 following into next academic year	?					Contact has been made to arrange for a small number of students to attend an intensive course in January around employability.
<b>Bath Rugby</b> Short term engagement course	1	10%				This is a short term engagement course which may lead onto more activities in January.
<b>Wiltshire College</b> Pre 16	2	60%	Good	Written	EOTAS staff phoning college. Regular review meetings	Doesn't work for everyone but still a good course for those without major behaviour issues.
<b>Swindon PRU</b> A balanced course of academic, practical and social activities	1	100%	Good	Oral	Contact from EOTAS staff	Good for people in the north of the County who need a fulltime place

Provider	Number of students	% of curriculum	attendance	reporting	contact	comment
<b><u>Outdoor learning</u></b> WOLT- provision from Darren	1 EOTAS group. 1 medical group	10% for each group	Good	Oral and linked into EOTAS reporting. Formal reporting. Excellent use of videos to show activities and progress	Good as Darren is part of the EOTAS team	
<b><u>Live School</u></b> Online provision from On Track, emailing and work support						This is a good filler for any gaps in fulltime provision short-term, not really suitable for fulltime provision on its own.
<b><u>Arts Centre Salisbury</u></b> Extensive art work activities	2 groups of students	5% for each group	Very good	EOTAS staff attend so feedback is frequent.	Good due to EOTAS staff attendance	This activity works well because it offers varied activities within the arts setting
<b><u>Alert Training</u></b> Functional skills, employability and work placement support. Link to apprenticeships next year	3	60%				This is a new provider to replace the work offered by First 4 skills. The 3 students have been interviewed and are ready to start this week.

Exclusions for schools

Academic year 2011-2012

Academic year to the end of July

Source: schools' exclusions returns to the LA

	Primary				Secondary				Special				All Schools			YPSS	
	Year to the end of July				Year to the end of July				Year to the end of July				Year to July		% Difference	Year to July	
	Maintained	Academy	All		Maintained	Academy	All		Maintained	Academy	All		2011-12	2010-11			2011-12
	2011-12	2011-12	2011-12	2010-11	2011-12	2011-12	2011-12	2010-11	2011-12	2011-12	2011-12	2010-11	2011-12	2010-11		2011-12	2010-11
<b>Permanent Exclusion</b>																	
Permanent Exclusion	9	0	9	13	17	12	29	43	1	0	1	0	39	56	-30.4	0	0
Reinstated by Head prior to GDCM	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	2	0	0	0	0	2	2	0.0	0	0
Reinstated by GDCM	0	0	0	2	3	0	3	0	1	0	1	0	4	2	100.0	0	0
Pending Appeal	2	0	2	0	1	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	5	0		0	0
<b>Effective Permanent Exclusion</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>-46.2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Fixed Period Exclusion</b>																	
Fixed Period Exclusion	466	8	474	455	988	767	1764	2442	15	1	16	22	2245	2919	-23.1	213	204
Days Lost	897	13	910	923	2081	1426	3525	4646	32.5	5	37.5	73	4454.5	5641.5	-21.0	282.0	215
Average days lost per exclusion	1.9	1.6	1.9	2.0	2.1	1.9	2.0	1.9	2.2	5.0	2.3	3.3	2.0	1.9	0.9	1.3	1.1
Number of pupils excluded	234	8	242	261	514	514	976	1209	12	1	13	15	1227	1485	-17.4	59	59
Average days lost per pupil	3.8	1.6	3.8	3.5	4.0	2.8	3.6	3.8	2.7	5.0	2.9	4.9	3.6	3.8	1.2	4.8	3.6
<b>Sub Groups:</b>																	
<b>LAC</b>																	
Fixed Period Exclusion	23	0	23	17	37	39	76	103	1	0	1	0	100	120	-16.7	10	1
Days Lost	45.5	0.0	45.5	39	99.0	78.0	177.0	224	4.0	0.0	4.0	0	226.5	263	-13.9	14.0	1
Average days lost per exclusion	2.0	0.0	2.0	2.3	2.7	2.0	2.3	2.2	4.0	0.0	4.0	0.0	2.3	2.2		1.4	1
Number of LAC pupils fixed period excluded	8	0	8	10	19	13	32	42	1	0	1	0	41.0	52	-21.2	2	1
Permanent Exclusion	0	0	0	0	2	1	3	1	0	0	0	0	3	1	200.0	0	0
<b>Effective Permanent Exclusion</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>SEN Statement</b>																	
Fixed Period Exclusion	153	3	156	137	62	45	107	151	14	1	15	15	278	303	-8.3	5	3
Days Lost	306.0	6.5	312.5	313.5	162.5	102.5	265.0	330	28.5	5.0	33.5	43	611.0	686.5	-11.0	5.0	2
Average days lost per exclusion	2.0	2.2	2.0	2.3	2.6	2.3	2.5	2.2	2.0	5.0	2.2	2.9	2.2	2.3		1.0	0.67
Number of SEN pupils fixed period excluded	61	3	64	65	29	25	54	52	11	1	12	9	130.0	126	3.2	3	1
Permanent Exclusion	4	0	4	6	1	0	1	2	1	0	1	0	6	8	-25.0	0	0
<b>Effective Permanent Exclusion</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>-16.7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>FSM</b>																	
Fixed Period Exclusion	162	2	164	139	256	166	422	465	4	0	4	2	590	606	-2.6	40	46
Days Lost	332.0	2.5	334.5	279.5	608.0	325.5	933.5	912	5.5	0.0	5.5	5	1273.5	1196.5	6.4	53.0	44
Average days lost per exclusion	2.0	1.3	2.0	2.0	2.4	2.0	2.2	2.0	1.4	0.0	1.4	2.5	2.2	2.0		1.3	0.96
Number of FSM pupils fixed period excluded	74	2	76	88	114	75	189	200	3	0	3	1	268	289	-7.3	14	15
Permanent Exclusion	5	0	5	3	5	3	8	8	1	0	1	0	14	11	27.3	0	0
<b>Effective Permanent Exclusion</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>-10.0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

Note: details for LAC, SEN and FSM exclusions are based on pupils' current status which may differ from pupils' status at the time of their exclusion.

**Exclusions from Secondary Schools**

**Academic year 2011-2012**

Year to the end of July

Source: schools' exclusions returns to the LA

DfE no	School Name	NOR	Permanent Exclusion	Reinstated by Head prior to GDCM	Reinstated by GDCM	Effective Permanent Exclusion	Number of pupils with Fixed Term exclusions	Number of Fixed Term exclusions	Days Lost to Fixed Term exclusions
4013	Melksham Oak	1,176				1	68	159	260.5
4001	Wyvern	328	3		1	2	50	130	262
4537	St Laurence	1,355	1	1			64	127	316.5
6906	Sarum	623	8			7	72	121	202.5
5411	Devizes	1,181	1				62	114	205.5
5408	Bradon Forest	1,035	3			2	57	107	169
4000	Abbeyfield	880	4		1	3	45	97	228
5415	Matravers	1,039	2			2	50	94	204.5
4069	Clarendon	1,092	3		1	2	48	98	380
5404	Sheldon	1,795					48	81	94.5
5406	John Bentley	1,140					47	79	143
4064	Malmesbury	1,274					38	76	120
4070	Stonehenge School	709	1	1			46	69	152.5
4071	Avon Valley	634					40	55	118
4072	Kingdown	1,562					38	54	87.5
5414	Hardenhuish	1,602					34	53	72.5
4075	John of Gaunt School	1,242					25	49	132
4066	Corsham	1,380					26	44	65
4006	Trafalgar	565					25	43	68.5
5402	Lavington School	693	1				24	37	91.5
5405	St John's, Marlborough	1,685					17	19	40
4067	Wootton Bassett	1,495	1			1	14	16	26
4610	St Joseph's	425					9	10	14
5400	St Augustine's	985					10	10	26
5403	Pewsey Vale	317	1			1	7	8	30
5413	Bishop Wordsworth's	907					5	6	7
6905	Wellington	863					6	7	6.5
4511	St Edmund's, Salisbury	783					1	1	2
5412	South Wilts Grammar	1,022					0	0	0
<b>Totals</b>			<b>29</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>976</b>	<b>1764</b>	<b>3525</b>

## Exclusions from Primary Schools

## Academic year 2011-2012

Year to the end of July

Source: schools' exclusions returns to the LA

DfE no	School Name	NOR	Permanen t Exclusion	Reinstated by Head prior to GDCM	Reinstated by GDCM	Effective Permanent Exclusion	Number of pupis with Fixed Term exclusions	Number of Fixed Term exclusions	Days Lost to Fixed Term exclusions
3056	Southbroom	180					12	36	92.5
3466	The Manor	203	3			1	14	36	45
2178	Princecroft	101					13	32	57
2191	Salisbury Manor Fields	190					5	17	26.5
3462	Amesbury Archer	207					5	17	29
3061	Durrington All Saints	157					6	16	19
3205	Warminster Sambourne	121					5	16	17
2170	Grove	391					5	15	36.5
2230	Trowbridge Longmeadow	107					4	13	35
2134	New Close	157					4	12	33
3468	Amesbury CofE	264					6	12	15.5
2223	Bowerhill	350					7	11	13
2226	Charter Primary	216					6	9	17
2193	Wansdyke	227					2	8	19.5
2228	Queen's Crescent	346	1			1	4	8	18
3015	Bradford on Avon Christ Church	405					4	8	8
3022	Bulford St Leonard's	251					5	8	19.5
3164	Shrewton	115					4	8	22
3216	St Peter's Junior	184					5	8	14.5
5225	The Avenue	296	1			1	3	8	17
2192	Pembroke Park	158					3	7	17
3331	The Trinity, Devizes	90	1			1	3	7	24
2190	Woodlands	234					2	6	16
2196	Holbrook	233					4	6	8
3030	St Dunstan	279	1			1	2	6	15
3222	St Barnabas	95					5	6	8
5209	Paxcroft Primary School	264					4	6	8
2028	Corsham Primary	602					5	5	7.5
2168	Priestley Primary	143					4	5	9
3063	Durrington CofE	168					3	4	3.5
3088	Hilperton	154					1	4	4.5
3140	Oaksey	90	1			1	2	4	10
3192	Westbury Junior	243	1			1	2	4	10
3220	Minety	116					2	4	9
3471	Lyneham	277					4	4	8.5
5202	King's Park, Melksham	306					2	4	4
5215	Castle, Ludgershall	239					3	4	7
5219	Clarendon Infants, Tidworth	293					2	4	10
2003	Fynamore	400					2	3	3
2004	Greentrees	233					3	3	2
2022	Ivy Lane	278					1	3	11
2023	St Paul's Chippenham	234					2	3	7
2185	Mere	192					2	3	5.5
3150	St Mary's, Purton	308					2	3	9.5
3400	West Ashton	106					1	3	7.5
3405	Winterslow	167					1	3	5.5
3459	Hindon	41					1	3	9
2009	Bratton	143					2	2	2
2031	Neston	164					1	2	6
2159	Kiwi	145					2	2	8
2222	Walwayne Court	272					2	2	5
3045	St Sampson's	195					2	2	9.5
3186	Urchfont	106					1	2	3
3201	Winterbourne Earls	179					1	2	2
3344	Forest & Sandridge	200					2	2	5
3383	Sarum St Paul's	213					2	2	7

DfE no	School Name	NOR	Permanent Exclusion	Reinstated by Head prior to GDCM	Reinstated by GDCM	Effective Permanent Exclusion	Number of pupils with Fixed Term exclusions	Number of Fixed Term exclusions	Days Lost to Fixed Term exclusions
3412	Christ The King RC, Amesbury	271					1	2	7
3450	Great Wishford	113					2	2	2
3460	Alderbury & West Grimstead	138					2	2	6
3463	Whitesheet	85					2	2	2
5200	Aloeric	318					2	2	2
5213	Holy Trinity, Calne	203					2	2	3
2005	Nursteed	205					1	1	1
2006	The Mead	488					1	1	2.5
2032	Corsham Regis	142					1	1	1.5
2087	Ramsbury	213					1	1	1
2184	Longleaze	176					1	1	2.5
2216	Burbage	118					1	1	0.5
3002	Ashton Keynes	170					1	1	1
3017	Longford	55					1	1	1
3036	Chirton	34					1	1	1.5
3047	Crockerton	109					1	1	1
3049	Collingbourne	112					1	1	1
3091	Hullavington	122					1	1	1
3163	Sherston	195					1	1	3
3176	St Mark's Junior	332					1	1	2
3190	St John's, Warminster	120					1	1	1
3191	The Minster	218					1	1	2
3203	St Bartholomew's	298					1	1	3
3207	Dilton Marsh	171					1	1	2.5
3308	Bishops Cannings	189					1	1	2
3362	St Andrew's, Laverstock	167					1	1	0.5
3401	Dauntsey's	153					1	1	1.5
3449	Broad Chalke	183					1	1	1
3465	Wylve Valley	118					1	1	0.5
3470	Wilton and Barford	122					1	1	1
5205	Frogwell	255					1	1	5
5206	Studley Green	190					1	1	2
5208	St Mary's RC, Chippenham	274					1	1	0.5
5217	Zouch	321					1	1	3
5218	Clarendon Junior, Tidworth	298					1	1	1
2008	Fitzmaurice	244					0	0	0
2029	Lypiatt	15					0	0	0
2034	Monkton Park	218					0	0	0
2037	Devizes Southbroom	201					0	0	0
2040	Easton Royal	52					0	0	0
2045	Gomeldon	143					0	0	0
2052	Hilmarton	101					0	0	0
2053	Horningsham	81					0	0	0
2060	Luckington	43					0	0	0
2065	Larkhill	272					0	0	0
2086	Stanton St Quintin	100					0	0	0
2091	Harnham Infant	241					0	0	0
2136	Westbury Infants	155					0	0	0
2137	Westwood-with-Iford School	87					0	0	0
2140	Wootton Bassett Infants	127					0	0	0
2157	Wyndham Park Infants'	269					0	0	0
2162	Noremarsh Junior	166					0	0	0
2180	Redland	290					0	0	0
2198	Ludwell	67					0	0	0
2202	St Sampson's	134					0	0	0
2208	Pewsey	176					0	0	0
2218	King's Lodge	395					0	0	0
2225	Bitham Brook	271					0	0	0
2227	Newtown	183					0	0	0

DfE no	School Name	NOR	Permanent Exclusion	Reinstated by Head prior to GDCM	Reinstated by GDCM	Effective Permanent Exclusion	Number of pupils with Fixed Term exclusions	Number of Fixed Term exclusions	Days Lost to Fixed Term exclusions
3000	All Cannings	136					0	0	0
3013	Box	172					0	0	0
3018	Broad Hinton	97					0	0	0
3019	Broad Town	68					0	0	0
3020	St Nicholas	93					0	0	0
3021	St Mary's, Broughton Gifford	68					0	0	0
3023	St Katharine's	79					0	0	0
3035	Cherhill	183					0	0	0
3038	Christian Malford	86					0	0	0
3040	Colerne	223					0	0	0
3048	Crudwell	116					0	0	0
3071	Figheledean St Michael's	91					0	0	0
3086	Heddington	47					0	0	0
3090	Holt	126					0	0	0
3094	Keevil	95					0	0	0
3096	Kington St Michael	125					0	0	0
3100	Lacock	79					0	0	0
3102	Langley Fitzurse	95					0	0	0
3104	Lea and Garsdon	107					0	0	0
3110	Lydiard Millicent	196					0	0	0
3117	Malmesbury Primary	421					0	0	0
3123	St Mary's Infant	149					0	0	0
3134	Newton Tony	37					0	0	0
3135	North Bradley	177					0	0	0
3141	Oare	94					0	0	0
3143	Ogbourne St G & St A	82					0	0	0
3149	Preshute	213					0	0	0
3158	Harnham Junior	270					0	0	0
3159	Seagry	37					0	0	0
3160	St George's, Semington	64					0	0	0
3161	Shalbourne	40					0	0	0
3162	Shaw	187					0	0	0
3166	Southwick	155					0	0	0
3170	Staverton	210					0	0	0
3172	Stratford-sub-Castle	125					0	0	0
3174	Sutton Veny	174					0	0	0
3193	Westbury Leigh	405					0	0	0
3199	Winsley	107					0	0	0
3229	Coombe Bissett	88					0	0	0
3230	Dinton	90					0	0	0
3239	St John's	92					0	0	0
3242	Brinkworth Earl Danby's	153					0	0	0
3243	Great Bedwyn	213					0	0	0
3244	By Brook Valley	165					0	0	0
3300	St Michael's, Aldbourne	137					0	0	0
3306	Baydon St Nicholas	110					0	0	0
3316	Chapmanslade	106					0	0	0
3318	Chilton Foliat	94					0	0	0
3319	St Peter's, Chippenham	256					0	0	0
3330	Derry Hill	207					0	0	0
3352	Heytesbury	56					0	0	0
3355	St Nicholas, Porton	103					0	0	0
3366	Morgan's Vale and Woodfalls	87					0	0	0
3372	The New Forest	178					0	0	0
3381	Rushall	98					0	0	0
3387	St Martin's, Salisbury	142					0	0	0
3388	Seend	103					0	0	0
3396	St Thomas a Becket	55					0	0	0
3402	Whiteparish All Saints	124					0	0	0

DfE no	School Name	NOR	Permanent Exclusion	Reinstated by Head prior to GDCM	Reinstated by GDCM	Effective Permanent Exclusion	Number of pupils with Fixed Term exclusions	Number of Fixed Term exclusions	Days Lost to Fixed Term exclusions
3406	Woodborough	157					0	0	0
3407	Woodford Valley	164					0	0	0
3418	St Joseph's RC, Malmesbury	130					0	0	0
3425	St Osmund's RC, Salisbury	204					0	0	0
3430	St John's RC, Trowbridge	298					0	0	0
3435	Wardour RC	104					0	0	0
3437	St Patrick's RC, Corsham	198					0	0	0
3448	Bemerton St John	201					0	0	0
3453	Chilmark & Fonthill Bishop	118					0	0	0
3454	Semley	106					0	0	0
3456	Holy Trinity Primary Academy	145					0	0	0
3457	Somerfords Walter Powell	44					0	0	0
3461	Kennet Valley	78					0	0	0
3464	Old Sarum	60					0	0	0
3467	Churchfields	134					0	0	0
3469	Five Lanes	102					0	0	0
3472	Bellefield	296					0	0	0
5201	Downton	188					0	0	0
5204	Saint Edmund's R C, Calne	198					0	0	0
5207	St George's RC, Warminster	113					0	0	0
5212	Sutton Benger	147					0	0	0
5214	St Joseph's RC, Devizes	207					0	0	0
5216	Pitton	101					0	0	0
5222	Rowde	212					0	0	0
5224	All Saints, Netheravon	195					0	0	0
			9			7	242	474	910

**Wiltshire Council**

**Children's Select Committee**

**Date of meeting: 29 November 2012**

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**Subject: Adoption Agency Annual Report**

**Cabinet member: Councillor Jane Scott – Lead Member for Children's Services**

**Key Decision: No**

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## **Executive Summary**

The Adoption Statutory Guidance requires adoption agencies to monitor their performance and provide reports to the executive of the local authority every six months about children who are in the care of their local authority and who are waiting to be placed with adoptive families. Wiltshire Council is a registered Adoption Agency, approved by the Department for Education (DfE) to provide services.

The Adoption Agency Annual Report and accompanying appendices provide detail on the performance of the Adoption Agency from the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2011 to the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2012 and an update report covering 1<sup>st</sup> April 2012 to the 1<sup>st</sup> of October 2012.

There have been a number of national developments during this time period alongside the publication of the adoption scorecard. Wiltshire's performance in the 2008/11 period raised concerns about delays for children in achieving adoption, particularly when set alongside the length of time care proceedings were taking in the local court. Some of the data used for the scorecard was related to a time before Wiltshire had a specialist adoption service.

In May 2012, Wiltshire agreed to be a pilot authority for an Adoption Diagnostic Assessment developed to support local authorities to explore how delay can be minimised for children who need permanence through adoption.

A robust Permanency and Adoption Improvement Plan is in place to improve the performance of the Adoption Agency. There is clear project management and there is evidence of improvement being made.

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**Carolyn Godfrey**  
**Corporate Director, Children's Services**

**Subject: Adoption Agency Annual Report**

**Cabinet member: Councillor Jane Scott – Lead Member for Children's Services**

**Key Decision: No**

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### **Purpose of Report**

1. The purpose of the report is to ensure that the Executive of the Council is satisfied that the Adoption Agency is effective and achieving good outcomes for children, young people and service users, as required by the 2011 Statutory Adoption Guidance and the 2011 Adoption National Minimum Standards.
2. It is recommended that the contents of this report are noted and accepted.

### **Background**

3. Wiltshire Council is a registered Adoption Agency, approved by the Department for Education (DfE) to provide services, which include:
  - deciding whether a child should be placed for adoption
  - approving people as prospective adoptive parents
  - 'matching' children with suitable adoptive parents
  - arranging the adoption of children
  - supporting adoptive placements before and after the making of an Adoption Order
  - assisting adopted adults to find out information about their adoption
  - assisting birth families wishing to seek information about an adopted relative
4. The work of the Adoption Agency is underpinned by the Adoption and Children Act 2002 and the 2005 regulations informed by this Act. The aim of this Act is to improve outcomes for children needing adoption. It brought adoption legislation in line with the Children Act 1989 and placed adoption support provision onto the statute for the first time.

### **National developments**

5. The National Minimum Standards and Regulations for Adoption were revised at the end of 2010 following consultation with Adoption Agencies. The new guidance issued in April 2011 promotes child-centred outcomes and higher quality care. The changes required by the new guidance were in place in Wiltshire by September 2011.
6. The Care Planning Regulations (2010) were introduced from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011 to promote more effective and timely planning for children and young people. The regulations stress the importance of assessment, care planning, intervention and review processes in improving the experience of care for children and in ensuring child centred practice at all times. The regulations also stress that permanence options should be identified as soon as possible

after a child becomes looked after and that there is a need to reduce delays in decisions about long term placements for children.

7. The final report of the Munro review of child protection was published in May 2011. The key recommendations are to:
  - Promote a system that values professional expertise
  - Promote a shared responsibility for the provision of early help.
  - Develop social work expertise
  - Improve the organisational context to support effective social work practice.
  - Clarify accountabilities and create a learning system/environment.
8. The Family Justice Review was published in November 2011. The purpose of the review was to evaluate the family justice system. The recommendations focus on strengthening parenting, reducing the time taken to progress cases through the courts and simplifying the family justice system, whilst continuing to protect children and vulnerable adults from risk of harm. A number of practice developments related to adoption and permanency have been made to improve practice and timeliness around court work and processes for children and families. Since the publication of the review, court reports have been simplified, new guidance written and meetings between the adoption agency, CAFCASS (Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service) and the judiciary have been established.
9. In March 2012, the DfE published “An action plan for adoption: tackling delay”. This sets out a plan for implementing incremental change and improvement between 2012 and 2014. In particular the DfE adoption plan seeks to address the following concerns:
  - A decline in the number of adoption orders granted in England and Wales in recent years.
  - A decline in the number of children placed for adoption nationally.
  - Delays for children in the adoption process; Family Justice System delays, home-finding, matching, recruitment of adopters, delays in assessment processes for children and for adopters.
10. New legislation and regulation is expected late in 2013. The DfE are currently consulting on a range of adoption and fostering proposals. For adoption, these are the new, shorter two-stage approval process for prospective adopters and fast-track procedure for approved foster carers and previous adopters. On fostering there is a package of changes to the foster carer assessment and approval process to make the process clearer, more proportionate and responsive to the needs of children coming into the care system. Consultation closes in December 2012.

### **Adoption Scorecards May 2012**

11. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of November 2011, the Government published the first Adoption scorecard. This measured the progress to adoption for children, providing new indicators of performance as follows:
  - Average time between a child entering care and moving in with his/her adoptive family (for children who have been adopted in the year).
  - Average time between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family.
  - Children who wait less than 21 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family (number and %).

- Adoptions from care (number adopted and % leaving care who are adopted in the year).
- Number and % of children for whom the permanence decision has changed from adoption.
- Average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family. (Where times for children who are adopted by their foster family are stopped at the date the child moved in with the foster family).
- Adoptions of children from ethnic minority backgrounds (number adopted and % of Black and Asian Minority Ethnic children leaving care who are adopted).
- Adoptions of children aged five or over (number adopted and % of children aged 5 or over leaving care who are adopted).
- Average length of care proceedings locally (in weeks). Number of children awaiting adoption (as at 31<sup>st</sup> March).
- Number of approved prospective adopters (as at 31 March 2013) data not yet collected.

12. Wiltshire's performance in the 2008/11 scorecard was below the national average for the number of days between a child first coming into care and moving in with their adoptive family. The scorecard raised concerns about delays for children in achieving adoption, particularly when set alongside the length of time care proceedings were taking in the local court.
13. The data used for the scorecard was related to a time before Wiltshire had a specialist adoption service. An analysis was completed of the 25 cases of the 2008/11 that were not placed within 625 days (England 3 year average). A number of themes were identified that caused delay and immediate changes were made to practice to improve the pace of adoption applications.

### **Outcomes UK Diagnostic Assessment**

14. In May 2012, Wiltshire Council adoption services were offered and agreed to be a pilot authority for a Diagnostic Assessment developed to support local authorities to explore how delay can be minimised for children who need permanence through adoption.
15. The diagnostic team reported a number of examples of good and innovative practice: the Adoption Panel receives a summary of the Looked After Child review for each child whose plan is adoption; the Panel also uses a spreadsheet to track the progress of children whose plan is adoption, prospective adopters and approved adopters; adopters spoke of assessments, once started, taking place in a timely way.
16. Immediately, an Improvement Plan was put in place – this is now known as the Permanency and Adoption Improvement Plan and is part of the report to the children's Safeguarding Improvement Board. The improvement plan reflects the main findings of the diagnostic assessment which was the need to ensure timely permanence planning that is embedded in the care planning process.

### **Main Considerations for the Council**

#### Adoption Agency Annual Report 2011/12

17. The Adoption Statutory Guidance requires adoption agencies to monitor their performance and provide reports to the Executive of the local authority every six months about children

who are in the care of their local authority and who are waiting to be placed with new families. These reports should include:

- the number, type and age of the children waiting for an adoptive placement and length of time they have been waiting
- the agency's performance against the timescales
- progress in the recruitment of suitable adoptive families
- the number of children placed for adoption and adopted since the last report
- the number of children whose placement has disrupted or where there has been a change of plan and the child is no longer to be placed for adoption.

18. The detail to meet these requirements is included as appendix 1: Adoption Agency Annual Report 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012. The Adoption Service Statement of Purpose is included as appendix 2.

#### Adoption Service performance at 31st March 2012

19. Children:

- By the end of March 2012, there had been 63 children in the adoption process throughout the year.
- Of the 63:
  - 17 had adoption orders in 2011/12
  - 2 are placed in adoptive placements in the USA
  - 14 are matched and placed with adopters
  - 1 was matched but not formally placed with Wiltshire adopters
  - 5 children had their adoption plans rescinded in 2011/12.
  - 2 are on hold in terms of placement/home-finding due to legal delay/further assessment required /may have a change of plan.
  - 1 child has become the subject of a Special Guardianship Order to foster carers.
  - 8 children have a placement identified but are not yet formally matched.
  - 13 children are waiting for a placement to be identified and the adoption team is actively home finding for them.
- Of the 63:
  - 3 children were under 12 months of age
  - 9 were 12-24 months
  - 33 were aged 2-4 years
  - 15 were aged 5-10 years
  - 3 were aged 11-15 years
  - There were 8 sibling groups of 2 and 2 sibling groups of 3.

20. Adopters:

- By the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2012, there had been 52 adopters in the whole adoption process for the year. Of the 52:
  - Adopters adopted 17 children from Wiltshire in 2011/12.
  - 19 are matched with child/children.
  - 4 have adopted 5 children from outside Wiltshire in 2011/12.
  - 3 adopters have resigned.
  - 9 are available for adoption placements.
- 3 sets of foster carers have been approved in this financial year to adopt the children they are currently fostering.

- It has been a busy year for the Adoption Agency in relation to the increase in numbers of children with adoption as their permanency plan and also in relation to enquiries from prospective adopters. There have been 82 enquiries in relation to adoption so far this year – a higher number of enquiries than at this point in the previous year.

21. Please see appendix 3 for the Adoption Panel statistics for 2011/12.  
Please see appendix 4 for the full Adoption Agency Update Report covering 1<sup>st</sup> April 2012 – 1<sup>st</sup> October 2012.

Adoption Service – budget information

22. Please find the budget information for the 2011/ financial year below:

<b>2011/12 Financial Year</b>	Budget	Actual
Salaries & team running costs	415,660	433,617
Carer recruitment & training	17,000	117
Adoption Allowances (all types)	642,308	638,299
Adoption Income	0	-48,517
	<b>1,074,968</b>	<b>1,023,516</b>
Central Recharges *		143,259
	<b>2,149,936</b>	<b>2,190,291</b>

\*Overheads including : ICT, HR, SST, Premises,

Department for Education Improvement Notice September 2012

23. In September 2012, the DfE issued the Council with an Improvement Notice. The Improvement Notice addresses issues raised in the April 2012 Ofsted report on the inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children in Wiltshire and the recommendations made as a result of the Adoption Scorecard and Diagnostic Assessment.
24. In terms of adoption the Improvement Notice requires the Local Authority to work with their partners to take action as follows:

Adoption Services

*Within one month of the date of this Improvement Notice, the Council must agree a plan with the Improvement Board which will improve the performance of the adoption service and which addresses the concerns set out in the Outcomes UK Diagnostic Report and the Council's Adoption Scorecard. The plan must set out milestone and performance indicators which will improve the performance of the adoption service and reduce delay. Progress against the performance indicator standards, targets and timescales must be reported at each meeting of the Improvement Board and action taken to address performance concerns and where standards, targets and timescales are not being met.*

*The Council should reduce the time taken to place a child for adoption from the point that the child comes into the care of the local authority. In doing so the council should work towards meeting the timescales set out in The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations and Statutory Adoption Guidance revised in February 2011.*

25. The Local Authority and its partner agencies are now working to make the improvements noted in the Safeguarding and Adoption Improvement Plan. The Safeguarding Improvement Board is co-ordinating and driving improvements.
26. There is also a more detailed and separate Permanency and Adoption Improvement Plan which has been agreed with the Safeguarding Improvement Board to improve the performance of the Adoption Agency. Progress against the performance indicators, targets and timescales at reported at each meeting of the Safeguarding Improvement Board.
27. The Permanency and Adoption Improvement Plan is organised around 4 strategic improvement goals:
  - Ensure timely and decisive permanency planning including long term placement stability.
  - Ensure robust systems and quality assurance processes are in place to monitor progress.
  - Ensure we have an adoption team with the right culture and skills and appropriate support.
  - Secure a customer focused adoption service by valuing adopters and prospective adopters.

#### **The Permanency and Adoption Improvement Plan – progress to date**

28. There has been evidence of continued progress in implementing the improvement plan; ensuring Adoption and Permanency planning is embedded in practice; raising awareness through training; and focussed workshops.
29. There is closer collaboration with the Independent Safeguarding Unit (ISU), quality assurance systems are in place and monthly reports on compliance with the Permanency Policy are being produced by the Independent Safeguarding Unit (ISU) Manager reported to SMT. Cases where drift had been identified have been audited and actions taken. Home finder meetings are held and attended by the ISU Manager. This promotes clearer communication and provides an opportunity for any concerns of 'drift' which are acted upon promptly.
30. Progress to date under each strategic improvement goal is noted below.

#### **Ensure timely and decisive permanency planning including long-term placement stability**

31. Both Ofsted and the Diagnostic Assessment identified the need to ensure more proactive intervention and clearer case management decisions at an earlier stage in order to reduce delay. In response to the recommendations, Children's Services have responded by taking a whole service approach. The permanency policy is now embedded into practice, with mechanisms for implementation and quality assurance systems now established. This can be evidenced through the implementation of the Permanency Policy Notification 1 (PPN1) form which is completed at every 2<sup>nd</sup> review (spreadsheet available). This document is monitored by the IRO and the ISU Manager; and scrutinised by Heads of Service for Safeguarding and Children in Care.
32. A dedicated Home Finder is now in post. The Home Finder attends all second reviews where adoption is considered as part of the permanency plan. The Home Finder has capacity to assist case holders through the adoption process, should this be required.

33. The duty officer for Family Placement attends all reviews where long term fostering is the permanency plan.
34. Both Concurrent Planning and “Fostering for Adoption” processes have been developed. Concurrent carers are being recruited. 5 carers have already been identified and are being assessed. The Service Manager for Family Placement is due to visit Devon Children’s Social Care in November 2012 to discuss their concurrent planning policy and guidance.
35. The specification for a post to provide dedicated therapeutic support for family placements (fostering and adoption) has been agreed. This post will be delivered in partnership with Oxford Health and will work closely with concurrent carers and prospective adopters particularly developing support and training on understanding and caring for children with attachment disorders and improving carer’s and adopter’s resilience.
36. There has been significant improvement in the timely transfer of cases into Children in Care (CiC) teams through the review of the case transfer protocol. This is an important development in improving case management for those children where it has been identified that the care plan will be adoption or long term fostering.

**Ensure robust systems and Quality Assurance processes are in place to monitor progress**

37. Performance information regarding adoption is now collated on a monthly basis. The Independent Safeguarding Unit (ISU) Manager has specific responsibility for monitoring compliance with the Permanency Policy and report findings to the Social Care and Integrated Youth Senior Management Team (SMT). Home Finder meetings have been expanded to include the ISU Manager as a standing member. This collaboration with ISU serves both to monitor activity in accordance with the permanency policy and an opportunity to discuss any drift identified by Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs).
38. The ISU Manager now notifies Heads of Service for Safeguarding and Children in Care of any cases where drift in permanency planning has occurred. Heads of Service have audited 7 such cases (involving 11 children) since the last Safeguarding Improvement Board (SIB) and actions undertaken to address issues identified.
39. In order to evidence improved performance, we now need to develop and implement an Adoption Service Specification. This will be finalised by the end of January 2013.

**Ensure we are an Adoption Agency with the right culture and skills and appropriate support**

40. Work continues within the Adoption Team to improve the performance of the service through individual appraisal, team and service training opportunities and individual supervision.
41. The Adoption Team continues to deliver workshops and consultation opportunities on permanence and adoption related issues. These will remain. In addition, Outcomes UK (OUK)/British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) have been commissioned to deliver training programmes and ‘Master Classes’ to all social care staff. The terms of reference for training and awareness-raising have been agreed and the first session will take place in December 2012.

## **Secure a customer focused Adoption Service by valuing adopters and prospective adopters**

42. Feedback forms for use by adopters and others attending Adoption Panel have been developed and are in use. The Assistant Team Manager (ATM) for Adoption has been given the responsibility of collating and analysing information to further develop the team approach to recruitment and training.
43. A process for fast tracking second time adopters has been developed. This will reduce delay.
44. The first meeting of the Adopter's Reference Group took place on the 26<sup>th</sup> of September 2012. Their ongoing feedback will be used to improve customer service and to improve the performance of the Adoption Service.
45. Wiltshire has also been granted a Central Government Adoption Improvement Grant. The spending plan below demonstrates the importance placed on developing initiatives that will improve both customer involvement and provide a platform for future service development:

## **Environmental and climate change considerations**

46. Environmental and climate change issues have been considered, with no potential impact identified.

## **Equalities Impact of the Proposal**

47. The proposal is that the contents of this report be noted and accepted.
48. The Adoption Agency sets out to achieve better outcomes for looked after children and young people to maximize their life chances. The Service contributes towards the Council's commitment to tackle inequalities and promote equality through its service. The Adoption Service aims to:
  - Provide a range of safe, secure and enduring adoptive placements to meet the assessed needs of children needing adoptive placements in order to promote and safeguard their welfare.
  - Ensure that adoptive placements promote stability and positive outcomes for children by working in partnership with adopted children, adoptive parents, birth families and other professionals in the adoption and adoption support processes.
  - Fully develop the role of corporate parenting in achieving positive outcomes for children needing permanent placements in line with the council's objectives.

## **Risk Assessment**

49. A number of actions are currently in place to mitigate against the risk that services will fail to safeguard children to a satisfactory standard. This risk is part of the Children's Services Risk Register and a Risk Action Plan has been written.
50. The ability to deliver timely and quality adoptions is a risk. A Permanency and Adoption Improvement Plan is in place under the Safeguarding Improvement Board to address the risk. There is an Improvement Plan Risk Action Plan.

51. There are risks associated with ability to meet in-year budgets. The Children in Care Commissioning Strategy is in place which includes financial mapping and monitoring. Service Specifications are currently being written to monitor the level of this risk.

### **Financial Implications**

52. The financial implications for the Council for managing effectiveness, outcomes for children and young people and Adoption Agency services are considered during the annual budget setting process and are in line with the financial plan and operating model for Children's Services.

### **Legal Implications**

53. The report satisfies the requirement under Standard 25(6) of the Adoption National Minimum Standards 2011.
54. The significant rise in numbers of children and young people in care proceedings will inevitably impact upon the number of adoptions and special guardianship orders. This will put additional pressure on resources for adoptive placements; adoption applications, assessment and support; and special guardianship assessment and support. This will increase demand upon Legal Services for legal advice and representation.

### **Conclusions**

55. Following the publication of the adoption scorecard and the adoption diagnostic, there is a comprehensive improvement plan in place. There is robust project management and there is evidence of improvement being made.

**Carolyn Godfrey**  
**Corporate Director, Children's Services**

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Date of report: 20th November 2012

### **Background Papers**

Permanency and Adoption Improvement Plan

### **Appendices**

Appendix 1: Adoption Agency Annual Report 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012  
Appendix 2: Adoption Service Statement of Purpose  
Appendix 3: Adoption Panel statistics 2011 – 2012  
Appendix 4: Adoption Agency Update Report 1<sup>st</sup> April 2012 – 1<sup>st</sup> October 2012

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## Appendix 1: Adoption Agency Annual Report 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012

### Introduction

1. The 2011 Statutory Adoption Guidance and the 2011 Adoption Minimum Standards place a requirement on local authority adoption services to ensure that the executive side of the Council receives a written report on the management, outcomes and financial state of the adoption agency to satisfy themselves that the agency is effective and is achieving good outcomes for children and/or service users. They must also satisfy themselves that the agency is complying with the conditions of registration (Minimum Standard 25.6; Statutory Adoption Guidance 3.3, and 5.39).
2. The 2011 Adoption Minimum Standards can be accessed at <https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/Adoption-NMS.pdf>  
  
The 2011 Statutory Adoption Guidance can be accessed at <http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/a/statutory%20guidance.pdf>
3. Further information on the organisation and delivery of adoption services in Wiltshire can also be obtained from the Adoption Service Statement of Purpose, which is reviewed annually, and is attached as Appendix 2.

### Background

4. Wiltshire Council is a registered adoption agency, approved by the Department for Education (DfE) to provide services, which include:
  - deciding whether a child should be placed for adoption
  - approving people as prospective adoptive parents
  - 'matching' children with suitable adoptive parents
  - arranging the adoption of children
  - supporting adoptive placements before and after the making of an adoption order
  - assisting adopted adults to find out information about their adoption
  - assisting birth families wishing to seek information about an adopted relative
5. The work of the Adoption Agency is underpinned by the Adoption & Children Act 2002 and the 2005 regulations made under this Act 2005. The aim of this Act was to improve outcomes for children needing adoption, it brought adoption legislation into line with the Children Act 1989 and placed adoption support provision onto the statute for the first time. The work of the adoption agency therefore spans the whole of children's social care services.
6. Currently the majority of children assessed as needing adoptive families are between the ages of 12 months and 10 years, who are already being 'looked after' because they cannot be cared for safely within their birth families. This is primarily because of their parents' serious misuse of drugs and/or alcohol, mental illness or learning disability, leading to severe abuse and/or neglect. Many Children who cannot live with their birth families and require adoption live with the repeated impact of their early life experiences, which can have far reaching effect on their emotional and physical development. Meeting this diversity of need requires a diversity of adoptive parents and families who have the skills and

commitment to support children and offer them a stable, loving, permanent home within which they can recover from their early life experiences and thrive.

## National Developments

7. The National Minimum Standards (NMS) and regulations for adoption were revised following consultation with adoption agencies at the end of 2010. The new guidance arrived in April 2011. Local authorities, independent providers and national organisations such as BAAF welcomed the proposed new standards which promote child-centered outcomes and higher quality care. The new guidance has changed the way in which adoption panels are constructed and managed to improve the timeliness of decision making. It has also increased the focus on the contribution of birth parents to the adoption process and for the first time placed timescales on the completion of life story and later life work for children.
8. The required changes to the adoption panel and to adoption practice and procedure in relation to the new guidance 2011 were in place in Wiltshire by September 2011. Staff and panel members have received training on the relevant issues and changes. Information sessions and preparation training for adopters have been revised and adoption support further strengthened. The adoption service has regularly offered workshops on related issues for adopters, foster carers and social care staff for example on life-story work and the completion of later life letters.
9. In late 2010 the DfE issued a consultation paper on CRB disclosures for safeguarding purposes on workers with vulnerable groups who are registered with the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA). The government made fostering and adoption panel membership a 'regulated activity' under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (SVG) Act 2006 and extend the eligibility for enhanced CRB checks to them and also required panel members to have their ISA registration verified. Wiltshire already carried out enhanced CRB checks on panel members and so there was no additional burden for the service when 'regulated activities' were extended to include adoption panels.
10. The Public Law Outline (which set out how care cases would be managed through the courts; to ensure timetabling is focused on the needs of the child, to enable early resolutions of cases, achieving better outcomes for children) is now well embedded into social work practice. The avoidance of delay in courts making decisions about children has been beneficial in some cases. Other delays have continued to be created by a lack of court time, difficulties in appointing expert witnesses and the inability, on occasions, to appoint a Children's Guardian to represent the child's wishes in court. These are issues which it was hoped would be addressed in the Family Justice Review late 2011.
11. The Care Planning Regulations (2010) were introduced from 1.4.11 to promote more effective and timely planning for children and relate to all regulations & guidance including the children act 1989 and Adoption and Adoption support legislation. The regulations stress the importance of:
  - Assessment, care planning, intervention and review processes so as to improve the experience of care for children and its outcomes
  - Maintaining the centrality of the child at all times
  - Increasing levels of scrutiny and oversight of the care plan by the Independent Reviewing Officers
  - Mechanisms for the Careful management of tricky issues :for example, Contact planning and facilitation

12. The regulations also stress that Permanence options should be identified as soon as possible after child becomes looked after and that there is a need to reduce delays in decisions and long term placement of children. It is emphasised that high quality care plans help judges to make timely, informed decisions and that additional support to prevent placement breakdown is essential.
13. The regulations also emphasise the enhanced participation of children, young people and their families in these processes e.g. children in care councils, personal advisers, review meetings, advocacy and suggests that a plan developed under the new regulations must be capable of satisfying 3 requirements:
  - Would this be good enough for my own child?
  - If things do not go as expected, is there a backup plan?
  - Is the plan really tailored to all 7 elements of this child's individual identified needs, particularly if these are complex and require multiple agencies?
14. These principles were pre-empted and have been continuously incorporated into adoption team practice, developments and planning for the future, they constantly underpin the work of the team. The objectives have been written into the adoption service and team plans since 2010. There were clear implications for the practice of the whole of children's social care services, particularly in terms of permanency planning and tracking.
15. The Munro review of child protection: final report, *a child centred system* was published in May 2011. The report details significant developments and improvement for Social work service delivery which are as equally important for adoption social work as any other dimension of children's social care. The key recommendations are to promote:
  - A system that values professional expertise
  - A shared responsibility for the provision of early help.
  - The development of social work expertise
  - Improvement to the organisational context to support effective social work practice.
  - To clarify accountabilities and create a learning system/environment.
16. On 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2011 the Government published the first adoption score card. This measured the progression to adoption for children, providing new indicators of performance for the whole children's social care agency. The indicators are:
  - Average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family, for children who have been adopted in the year.
  - Average time between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family.
  - Children who wait less than 21 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family (number and %).
  - Adoptions from care (number adopted and % leaving cares who are adopted in the year).
  - Number and % of children for whom the permanence decision has changed away from adoption.
  - Average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family. Where times for children who are adopted by their foster family are stopped at the date the child moved in with the foster family.
  - Adoptions of children from ethnic minority backgrounds (number adopted and % of BME children leaving care who are adopted).

- Adoptions of children aged five or over (number adopted and % of children aged 5 or over leaving care who are adopted).
  - Average length of care proceedings locally (in weeks). Number of children awaiting adoption (as at 31<sup>st</sup> March).
  - Number of approved prospective adopters (as at 31 March 2013) data not yet collected. Publication of the scorecard was criticised by many for over simplifying the complexities involved in achieving successful adoption placements for many children from the care system.
  - The data used to construct the scorecard related to 01.04.08-31.03.11(pre a specialist adoption focus in Wiltshire).
17. The score card has given adoption agencies new indicators for collecting management information regarding performance which need to be built into the data collection systems. The score card was published again in December 2011 with refined data.
18. There were delays identified in the permanence planning and legal processes for some children in Wiltshire and some delays in finding adoptive families for children with complex needs. This information has been evaluated, is understood by the agency and improvement is underway.
19. The Family Justice Review was published in November 2011. The purpose of the review was to evaluate the family justice system which was seen to be in crisis; the recommendations were to strengthen parenting, reduce time taken to progress cases through the courts and simplify the family justice system, whilst continuing to protect children and vulnerable adults from risk of harm. The review made several proposals which will impact on adoption and permanence practice. These proposals connect with the Government's action plan for adoption, promoting dovetailing of agency and court processes to improve timeliness and outcomes for families.
20. Several practice developments around adoption and permanence have been made in order to improve practice and timeliness around court work and processes for children and families. Since the publication of the family justice review; court report formats have been simplified, new guidance written and meetings between the adoption agency, CAFCASS and the judiciary have been established.
21. In March 2012 the Department for Education published "An action plan for adoption: tackling delay". This sets out a plan for implementing incremental change and improvement between 2012 and 2014. This action plan is in response to government concerns regarding:
- A decline in the number of adoption orders granted in England and Wales in recent years.
  - A decline in the number of children placed for adoption nationally.
  - Delays for children in the adoption process; Family Justice System delays, home-finding, matching, recruitment of adopters, delays in assessment processes for children and for adopters.
22. The action plan details many proposed incremental changes to adoption procedure and practice. New Legislation and regulation is expected late 2013, consultation on the proposals for adoption and fostering is expected October 2012. The action plan proposes:
- New preparation and assessment framework/agreements for prospective adopters
  - New regulatory requirements

- New Ofsted inspection framework; with an emphasis on timeliness for children and adopters.
- Review of local authority commissioning arrangements
- Creation of a National Gateway for Adoption.
- The creation of a national currency, “adoption Passport” to promote access to adoption (including therapeutic services and CAMHS) for all adopters.
- National awareness raising campaigns about adoption: marketing tools and recruitment forum.
- The development of the *Adopters Charter* in all adoption agencies.
- That more children should be adopted by their foster carers: the promotion of concurrent caring (fostering and adopting) and fostering for adoption.

23. In Wiltshire the adoption team have been working to improve timeliness in adoption assessments, tackle delays and promote a sense of urgency in adoption practice in anticipation of the changes ahead, the details of these efforts are given below. There is regular discussion at team meetings and the practice development forum about changes/developments required and those anticipated.

### **Adoption Agency Developments**

24. Wiltshire has had a specialist, county wide adoption service since April 2010. The team is centrally located in Trowbridge. The team has grown since originally created. The adoption team contains a team manager (who also takes the role of the adoption agency adviser), an assistant team manager, 2 adoption support co-ordinators, 5 full time equivalent (FTE) assessing adoption social work posts and 2 FTE unqualified support worker posts. All Adoption team posts were filled by experienced social work practitioners, who had a particular interest in adoption work and a desire to develop the service. The work of the team is to undertake adoption work for the county; assessments of prospective adoptive applicants, home-finding for children who need adoptive placements, information sessions, recruitment, preparation, training, post adoption counselling and adoption support. The rationale for creating a specialist adoption service in Wiltshire was as previously reported to develop a skilled and specialist service to focus on Adoption, thus improving outcomes for children. The team also provides training and consultation for adopters and other social care staff as requested or identified to further enable the best outcomes for children.
25. In 2011 the adoption team manger undertook some work with the Children in Care Council around adolescent perception of adoption. Some of the young people in the group had siblings who had been adopted; some had children themselves placed for adoption. All wanted to know more about adoption and ensure that young people like them had access to adoption support services, to discuss contact arrangements for example. This piece of work fitted with the requirements of the amended guidance 2011 and also raised the issue of the importance of consistency around contact arrangements. Until this point direct contact arrangements (supervision and facilitation) post adoption had remained the responsibility of the social care teams and this had not guaranteed consistency.
26. In October 2011 the management of direct contact post adoption came into the adoption team. An extra FTE Adoption Social Worker post was created to create and maintain a process for direct contact post adoption. Alongside the adoption support co-ordinators this worker can also be a contact for individuals requiring specific help with understanding contact issues. This work was reposted to the Corporate Parenting Panel during the Ofsted inspection in May 2012. The adoption social worker with half time responsibility for direct contact post adoption currently manages and reviews 25 direct contact cases some of these refer to sibling groups and relate to several children.

27. The specialist centralised service has required the collation of files, records and statistical information. Managers, social work staff and admin have together developed spreadsheets and other systems for gathering comprehensive data and performance information which had previously been unavailable. The majority of Adoption team work is not held on care-first and this means that the collection of management information is largely manual. In the future there will need to be comprehensive data collected regarding permanence planning and tracking for children and the new adoption scorecard indicators.
28. An enquiry rota for the adoption team is established to deal directly and sensitively with all enquiries from people interested in adopting. All enquirers speak to an experienced adoption worker and the response is immediate. In the last year there have been 115 enquiries from prospective adopters in Wiltshire this is a decrease on 2010/11. Although there has been a reduction, which is in keeping with the national picture, Wiltshire is still receiving a good level of enquiry when compared to comparator agencies.
29. The two Children in Care and four community safeguarding teams undertake the work of planning for permanence for children. The impact of national developments have provided tighter time scales and deadlines for decision making, adoption panel and care planning at a time when the type of cases where children require adoption have become more complex and challenging. Having a specialist adoption service has enabled closer working between the teams regarding timely planning for permanence and placement requirements. This has continued to develop. In September 2012 in response to the government action plan Wiltshire created a specialist home finding post for adoption to promote family finding for all children needing adoption placements and to work alongside Children's social care staff in planning for permanence. This post was created from within existing adoption team resources and although showing improvement in matching and linking children both within the county and with external agencies, the development has created a reduction in capacity to undertake assessments of prospective adopters in-house.
30. The adoption team continues to have many challenges to face alongside the challenge of continuously improving timescales for adoption practice at the same time as not compromising on the quality of assessment. Other challenges include a continued increase in the number of LAC and the number of children needing adoption placements that have complex health and/or developmental needs. Both numbers have risen considerably and steadily since 2008. This has required a strategy to recruit adopters with the skills to meet the complex needs of these children. A recruitment strategy is in place and the specialist service has had the capacity and stamina to actively pursue specific adopters with specific skills for children and to fast track assessments when required. In the last year the team have successfully found, assessed, matched and supported a number of complex placements. Significantly some of these have been for children who have waited for some time to be placed for adoption. The service believes it is imperative that we ensure all relevant children have the opportunity for permanence and stability through adoption, however complex their needs
31. The adoption team will need to respond to the adoption action plan and meet new timescales for adoption assessments. There is a strong commitment and willingness to continually improve adoption practice within the team.
32. The broad Adoption service plan for 2011/12 was again linked closely to the Agency plan;
  - To increase the number of adopters available to meet the diverse needs of children needing placement

- To improve the permanency planning process for children to enable early home-finding and specific recruitment if required.
  - To continue to raise the profile of adoption and adoption support- through recruitment, literature, consultation and training workshops.
  - To implement the revised National standards in terms of adoption agency practice and panels and learn from the scorecard requirements and reflection on past practice.
33. The adoption team has at times in 2011/12 been short staffed. 2 experienced members of staff resigned at the end of 2011, the posts were advertised and filled but there were 3 and 4 month gaps respectively in adoption service provision. One member of the team has been on adoption leave (until 1.4.12). One adoption support co-ordinator was on sick leave for 5 months which significantly affected service delivery. In May 2012 the Assistant Team Manager resigned and could not be replaced until October 2012. This has had a significant impact on the workload of the Team Manager particularly in terms of capacity for development work.

### **Adoption Service Performance March 31st 2012**

34. The adoption service continues to be pro-active, child and outcome focussed.
35. Children: by the end of March 2012 there had been 63 children the adoption process throughout the year. Of the 63:
- 3 children were under 12 months, 9 were 12-24 months, 33 were aged 2-4, 15 were aged 5-10, 3 were aged 11-15 and 0 were over 15. There are 8 sibling groups of 2 and 2 sibling groups of 3, 33 boys and 30 girls.
  - 2 are Black/Kenyan, 1 is Black/Ghanaian and 1 is White/Polish, 2 are White British/Black Caribbean and one is White British /Tai. One is White/ British and "Romany Catholic" (described by birth family). The remaining are White/British.
  - 17 had adoption orders granted in 2011/12.
  - 2 are placed in adoption placement in USA and no longer LAC (considered adopted for statistical purposes).
  - 14 had been matched and placed with adopters (of which 8 had applications lodged with the court for adoption orders).
  - 1 was matched but not formally placed with Wiltshire adopters.
  - 5 children had their adoption plans rescinded in 2011/12.
  - 2 are on hold in terms of placement/home-finding due to legal delay/further assessment required /may have a change of plan.
  - 1 has become the subject of a special Guardianship Order to foster carers.
  - 8 have a placement identified but are not yet formally matched.
  - 13 children are waiting for a placement to be identified and the adoption team is actively home finding for them. Within this number there are 2 sibling groups of 2. The group included:
    - 2 children with extremely complex health needs/unknown prognoses
    - 1 child with severe emotional difficulties/unknown diagnosis
    - 2 children with unknown developmental/health prognoses.
    - 6 children with a varying range of identified attachment difficulties/disorders
    - 1 child with Down's syndrome and other complex matching criteria.
36. Adopters: by the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012 there had been 52 adopters in the whole adoption process for the year. Of the 52:

- Adopted 17 children from Wiltshire in 2011/12.
- 19 are matched with child/children.
- 16 are awaiting an adoption order.
- 4 have adopted 5 children from outside Wiltshire in 2011/12.
- 4 Wiltshire children have been matched with adopters from outside Wiltshire (1 child is now adopted, 2 are in a kinship placement for adoption in the USA and no longer LAC).
- 14 have 15 Wiltshire children matched and placed
- 3 have 3 Wiltshire children linked but not yet formally matched.
- 3 have resigned.
- 2 are on hold following breakdown of placements made by another agencies and both are expected to resign. 1 is intending to resign due to changes in personal circumstances.
- 9 are available for adoption placements. All are offering placements for either single children or sibling groups of 2 aged 0-6 years with a level of complexity of need.
- 3 sets of foster carers have been approved in this year to adopt the children they are currently fostering.
- The majority of children placed for adoption are placed in Wiltshire with Wiltshire adopters.

37. The Adoption Team set an ambitious target of 25 sets of newly approved adopters in the year and we achieved 17: 3 withdrew late on in the process after a considerable amount of assessment had taken place. Our target for 2012/13 is 25. Some of the work carried out in 2011/12 is as follows:

- 17 assessments of adopters were completed during the year and at 31.3.12 there were 16 further assessments of adopters underway. Some of these were specialist assessments for particular children.
- We continue to feature children and adopters at SWAC and through the National register as soon as possible.
- The adoption team is proactive in planning the placement of children for adoption, the ATM in the team chairs all transition planning meetings and relates planning to timescale, tasks and individual children's needs.
- We continue to want to work with colleagues in the children's social care teams to further increase the numbers of children offered permanency through Special Guardianship Orders in 2012/13.
- We have set ourselves an ambitious target for 2012/13 of achieving adoption for 7% of the available LAC population.
- As well as the training mentioned elsewhere in this report, there have been 6 information sessions, 3 preparation training courses and 2 safer caring courses in the year presented by the adoption team.
- There have been 28 initial assessment visits resulting in 18 formal adoption applications.
- Of the children placed for adoption in 2011/12 the majority were placed with Wiltshire adopters, links between children and adopters are being made in a timely way and adoption team staff take a role in challenging any delays in processes for children they encounter.
- The team has completed post adoption counseling with 33 adopted adults.
- The Adoption support co-coordinators have written 16 new adoption support plans and 10 special guardianship support plans for children about to be placed. The adoption support co-coordinators have in addition written 70 support plans for those returning to the agency for support post adoption.
- All team members regularly consult on adoption and permanence issues as required.

- All 17 adoptive placements approved in the year were assessed and approved within the 8 months timescale.
  - All reporting to Panel for suitability to adopt (approval of adopters) has been within 6 weeks of the completion of prospective adopter's reports.
  - Significantly Wiltshire had no unplanned endings of adoption placements in 2011/12.
38. On 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012, there were a total of 418 Looked after Children. 29 (6.9. %) were subject to placement orders (could be placed for adoption). The number of LAC minus those children in care for 6 months or less (and therefore not available for permanence) was 340. Of these 16 children (4.7%) were placed for adoption. 25 (7.3%) achieved permanence through either special guardianship or adoption in the year. Of the 17 children achieving adoption during the year, 13 (76.4%) were placed within 12 months of the decision that they should be placed for adoption. The four not placed within this timescale had complex matching and placement requirements. 2 children placed but not adopted in the year had a legally complex, inter-country kinship adoption placement to the USA, are no longer LAC and are considered adopted for statistical purposes.
39. This compares with the picture on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011 when there were 384 Looked after Children, of whom 28 (7.2%) were subject to placement orders. The number of LAC minus those children in care for 6 months or less (and therefore not available for permanence) was 314 of these 22 children achieved permanence (7%). Of the 15 children achieving adoption during the year, 12 (80%) were placed, within 12 months of the decision that they should be placed for adoption. The four not placed within this timescale had complex matching requirements.
40. In the last year there has been a significant increase in the looked after children population of which it should be noted there is a significant cohort of adolescents where adoption is not the agreed permanence plan. The outcomes of the adoption service response to this increase in LAC in terms of a percentage increase in the number of children placed for adoption will show more accurately in 2012/13 as the result of the time taken to achieve placement for adoption.
41. There were 8 Special Guardianship Orders made in 2011/12 which is an increase on the previous year.

### **Adoption periodical payments and Special Guardianship Financial support**

42. There has been a general increase in requests for financial support to Adopters and Special Guardians over the year. The agency is committed to enabling placements and supporting permanence in this way as required and in particular creating bespoke packages of support for children with complex needs or disabilities. There are currently 31 adoptive families receiving adoption periodical payments, 20 receiving adoption allowances and 40 families receiving Special Guardianship allowances. The assessments for financial support are made by the adoption support co-ordinators and each arrangement is reviewed a minimum of annually. Financial support is often closely linked to support plans including other services.
43. There are funds in the adoption budget for decisions to be made quickly to buy placements outside of Wiltshire through the consortium (SWAC) and other agencies as required. Wiltshire provides placements for other agencies and achieves income from this which boosts this funding. Accessing funding for the placements required is not an issue that has not been recorded as a delaying factor. It is a fact that specialist placements with private and voluntary sector agencies (VAA'S) are costly and a challenge for the local authority to

fund. Costs in this sector are rising and variable. One agency offering specialist fostering for adoption placements recently quoted a Wiltshire home-finder £65K for placement for a single child with complex needs. This was an option to be considered because of the needs of the child and the length of time she has been waiting for a placement. Unfortunately the private agency had no approved carers available. Local authorities are “capped” in what they can charge for their own placements if selling to another agency, the fees have not increased since 2010 and are frozen at £13K, for a single placement outside London, VAA’s can currently charge £24K. If it were a direct exchange of funds a local authority would need to sell 5 placements to fund one at £65k. There have always been budgetary commitments to funding placements outside of the authority but these are likely to increase in the future with the focus on timely adoption, increase use of external provision and the competition for placements. Wiltshire will need to prepare financially for this commitment.

## **The Adoption Support Service**

44. This part of the service continues to grow and develop and there has been a continuing increase in demand with 157 new referrals in the year. There are two Adoption Support Co-ordinators in post, each covering half of the county. They are responsible for ensuring that every child being placed for adoption has an Adoption Support Plan in place and for ensuring that any of the parties to adoption are provided with an assessment for adoption support services, if requested. They each line-manage an Adoption Support Worker, whose role is to provide practical support to adopters.
45. The adoption support co-ordinators are the single point of contact for adopters, adopted children, birth parents and birth families for support. They work closely with all involved in an adoption situation to help the different parties through the challenges they may face.
46. The Adoption Support Co-ordinators also provide support groups and activities for adoptive families. The Adoption support workers organise family days and events. They also produce an adoption support newsletter 3 times per year which is an important source of support for Wiltshire adopters post adoption.
47. The adoption support service also provides support plans and services including contact arrangements for Special Guardians. A support plan is required for court proceedings. This area of work has increased significantly in the last year and the assessments of need are often complex and difficult to negotiate. The co-ordinators have completed 17 assessments for support plans for special guardianship arrangements in the last year. Given the agency’s commitment to promoting SGO as a permanence option for children it is anticipated that this area of work will continue to grow and will raise further resource implications. It is unlikely that it will continue to be manageable within existing resources in the adoption team.
48. Wiltshire adoption support includes groups for adopters on attachment issues and dealing with difficulties arising for adopted children. These groups are available to adopters’ county wide, are very well attended and valued by adopters. The groups meet monthly.
49. The work undertaken by adoption support is significant in helping adoption placements to sustain when they encounter sometimes significant difficulties. It is important that the workers are responsive and creative in their approach. It is also important that adoptive families in difficulty have access through the co-ordinators to mainstream support services provided for children and families in distress, including CAMHS and the crisis intervention service.

50. The Adoption Post-Box service is managed by the Adoption Support Co-ordinators and continues to grow; almost every adopted child has some form of ongoing contact (direct or indirect) with birth relatives. The Post-Box service acts as the channel through which communications flow between the adoptive family and the birth family.
51. There are currently 208 active post-box arrangements across the county and 25 direct contact arrangements this number is increasing. All indirect contact arrangements are reviewed annually by the Adoption Support staff.
52. The adoption support co-ordinator's arranged the seventh Wiltshire annual adoption conference in March 2012, the title of which was "Who do we think we are? - Issues around identity and contact". The conference was attended by 120 people, including adopters, adopted people, IRO'S, Special Guardians, CAMHS workers, teachers, social workers and adoption panel members. The day was led by Richard Rose from SACCS, who was joined by presenters from partner agency PACT, Dr Vicky Sutton Clinical psychologist and members of the Wiltshire adoption team. The feedback was very positive and the day provided information to inform service development going forward.

### **The Adoption team development group**

53. This group attached to the adoption team meetings has met since early 2011 and is comprised of Adoption and Adoption Support practitioners. It provides an opportunity for the sharing and discussion of good practice in adoption and considers where and how improvements to practice can be made. The group also has responsibility for planning the information sessions, training/preparation courses for people applying to become adoptive parents and for planning adoption support service developments.
54. There is an adoption team development plan; team members take responsibility for leading on particular areas of the plan. Issues covered in the last year have been:
  - Contact post adoption-all aspects of this and the support required ensure plans work for the children involved- now embedded in practice.
  - Incorporating and listening to the child's voice-information required collection of views - now embedded in practice.
  - E-safety -family safety policies work with the South West Grid-now embedded in practice
  - Permanency planning processes-in process
  - A Concurrent planning scheme (placement of children for adoption with carers who foster them initially)-in process
  - Child appreciation days process (life story work and days celebrating the child's identity)-work completed
  - Work with birth families, including siblings of children placed for adoption- in process.
55. Recently the plan has been reviewed to include developments required around the adoption action plan.
  - Development of the Adopters Charter-in process
  - Development of the enquiry and initial assessment processes-in process

### **Adoption Training**

56. Adoption Training is an important component of the overall Training Plan for children's social care. The Adoption Team Manager plans the priority training needs of staff and

Adoption Panel members, to ensure that they are properly equipped to carry out their responsibilities under the adoption legislation. Team members take particular responsibility for specific areas of practice and service development and attend courses enabling them to do this. In the last year adoption team members have been supported by the agency to attend specialist Attachment training, training on play therapy techniques, on assessment techniques and on contact issues. The specialist home finder is about to embark on training relating to finding placements for children with complex needs and family exchange days.

57. Practice development, regulation changes and learning from major reviews such as the Munro report is fed into the team alongside formal training.
58. All of the adoption team are up-to-date in their safeguarding training have completed the Inclusion and diversity training. Those members of the team who line manage others have attended or have plans to attend elements of the management matters training.
59. The adoption team has regular team meetings which have regular agenda items for home-finding, complex assessment discussion and reflection on practice, applications and children coming through available for placements/matching, adoption support updates/events.
60. The adoption team co-ordinates a "Talk Adoption" forum every three months for all staff within the agency. This is an informal, lunchtime gathering where staff can meet and bring items regarding adoption practice for discussion. The sessions can be used for consultation, to discuss individual case progression, process or general adoption practice issues.
61. The adoption team provide training for staff and adopters to ensure best practice in the placement of children and to support adoptive placements. Some of the training events planned for this year include:
  - Life-story Work with Children
  - Preparing Later life letters/indirect contact
  - Transition planning
  - Preparing Child Permanence Reports (repeated twice a year)
  - Preparing Prospective Adopters Reports (repeated annually)
  - Contact and Attachment in Permanent placements.
  - E-safety
  - Safer caring

### **The Home-finder Management Group**

62. This group meets quarterly with the aim of monitoring and tracking the progress of every child and adopter in the adoption and long-term fostering processes. Where there appears to be a delay in identifying a suitable placement, the Group considers what action is needed to move things forward. For example, with a particularly difficult to place child, recommending that she/he is featured in the BAAF publication 'Be My Parent'. Every child needing a permanent placement has a nominated home-finder pro-actively searching for a placement for them. Responsibility for the home-finder publication has been with the ATM adoption and monitoring the progress of children to adoption is part of the team role.

## **Contracts with PACT**

63. The Agency has three main service contracts with PACT (Parents and Children Together) a voluntary adoption agency which specialises in assessing people as suitable for adopting a child from overseas (inter-country adoption) and in providing adoption support and intermediary services to adopted adults and the birth families of adopted people. This latter service is provided when an adopted adult wishes to trace her/his birth relatives or when the birth relatives of an adopted person wish to try and trace that person. As part of this adoption support contract with PACT an independent support service is offered to birth parents whose children are being placed for adoption. There is also a framework contract of which PACT are a part, through this they complete step parent adoption assessments for Wiltshire and can offer to complete mainstream adoption assessments as required. There is a further contract with PACT commissioned by the agency for support for a specific placement.
64. The contracts with PACT are regularly monitored and reviewed, in order to ensure that the services it provides on our behalf are meeting the needs of the public and are cost-effective. The volume of work being taken on by PACT under all three main contracts continues to increase. The PACT adoption support workers meet regularly with the Wiltshire adoption support co-ordinator's to ensure regular dialogue and coordination of services. The adoption support contract is deliberately flexible to enable response to varying need.
65. The Agency no longer has a contract with Adoption UK as the service offered could be supplied by in-house services. The Agency retains a corporate membership and provides all newly approved adoptive parent's free membership of Adoption UK for the first year as a support. The service they provide is unusual, in that all their workers are themselves adoptive parents and adopters find this very supportive. The option is still there to access Adoption UK training provision, literature and to spot purchase individual services if required.

## **SWAC Membership**

66. The Agency continues to be a member of the South West Adoption Consortium (SWAC) to which all the local authorities and large, national voluntary adoption agencies in the region belong. It is a large consortium now with 18 members. The purpose of SWAC is to share resources, where it has not been possible to achieve a local placement match for a child, to increase the range of options available, thus minimising delays. There are regular SWAC meetings where practice and service development, national developments and training are discussed and shared.
67. The Adoption Team Manger is a member of this peer group and attends regular meetings. There are also SWAC group meetings for adoption support workers, agency advisers, legal advisers and medical advisers as well as adoption panel chairs.
68. There is a SWAC exchange register for finding South West placements and there are 4 SWAC exchange meetings per year, usually held in Taunton where children and adopters are presented. A Wiltshire home-finder, children's social workers and an adoption support co-coordinator attend these meetings in the effort to find families for specific children.

## **The Adoption Panel**

### Panel's Work

69. The year of 2011/12 saw a further increase in the Panel's workload, there were 22 pre arranged panels and 1 extra one arranged as required. There are 23 panels planned for 2012. Increase in work load has been In response to the increasing number of children requiring adoption placements, there has also been an increase in the number of 'matches' recommended and an increase in the number of adopters approved.
70. Both the independent and professional Panel members have showed great commitment and flexibility in rising to this challenge and ensuring that the Panels were always quorate and happen as required.

### Panel central list Membership

71. The revised guidance for 2011 brought changes to panel composition and tenure over the last year. Panel membership has changed over the year with 3 independent members resigning, for personal reasons. 2 new members were recruited and a third is underway. 2012 will bring further changes and the likely need for a more vice chairs and new social work representatives to respond to the increased need for panels to be more flexible.
72. The current Department for Education consultation paper on the adoption and fostering proposals contains further proposed changes to adoption and fostering panel function, tenure and quoracy which will require implementation during 2012/13.

### Panel Training

73. The panel had a half day training workshop July 2011 linked to the regulatory changes in the revised guidance 2011 this updated panel members on the proposed changes to panel processes and adoption agency functioning. Each panel meeting is completed with a process review which reflects on the business of the day and enables learning and development.
74. The annual Adoption Panel Training Day for 2011 was held on December 2<sup>nd</sup> .This was facilitated by the panel chair. The morning session looked at panel functioning and process.
75. Once again, the afternoon session was shared with Agency staff and adoptive parents; the panel chair facilitated an "open space" session entitled "discovering best practice in adoption services what are the opportunities right now". Panel feedback was very positive as was that from the Agency staff. The panel training day for 2012 is booked for December 14<sup>th</sup>.The afternoon open space forum is entitled "How can we best achieve permanence for children" the title connects directly to the action plan for adoption and the improvement plan and will be an important opportunity for multidisciplinary discussion.
76. There have been further changes to panel functioning, since 1.9.12 and the family justice review recommendation that should be placed for adoption decisions for children in proceedings are removed from panel business.
77. All panel central list members have had annual performance reviews

## Summary of the Panel's Work

78. See Appendix 3 for statistics detailing the work of the Panel in 2011/12. In brief, the Panel recommended that:
- 27 children should be placed for adoption
  - 17 sets of adopters should be approved
  - 19 matches should be made
  - 5 changes of plan were recommended
  - Panel work also included consideration of:
    - 59 reviews of plans for children (feedback to IRO's and social workers)
    - 1 deferred application of adopters (needing to come back to panel at a later stage).
79. In all cases considered by the panel prospective adopters, children and birth parents have been notified within the timescale of the panel recommendations and of the agency decisions. Notification of the Agency Decision Makers decision to parents, guardian and prospective adopters has been given orally within 2 days and in writing within 5 days again in line with regulatory timescales.
80. All ADM decisions have been within 7 working days of receipt of reports/panel recommendation and final minutes.
81. There have been no referrals to the independent review mechanism (IRM) for adoption cases.

## **Appendix 2: Adoption Service Statement of Purpose July 2012**

### **Introduction: Why Does Wiltshire Provide A Statement of Purpose?**

1. The National Minimum Standards for Adoption set out the requirement for adoption agencies to compile a statement detailing what services are provided, the governing principles and who manages and provides the services. The statement of purpose is for:
  - children and young people
  - birth relatives
  - prospective and approved adoptive families
  - social workers working within Wiltshire and in other authorities
  - councillors
  - adoption and permanence panel members
  - Office for Standards in Children's Services,
  - Education and Skills (Ofsted)
  - Members of the public.
2. The Statement of Purpose fulfils the requirement of Standard 18 of the Adoption National Minimum Standards 2011, Regulation 2 of the Local Authority Adoption Services (England) Regulations 2003, Adoption support agencies (England) and adoption agencies regulations 2005 and the Adoption & Children Act 2002.
3. Wiltshire Adoption Service statement of purpose is reviewed annually.
4. The statement of purpose is endorsed by the Children's Services Senior Management Team.
5. Copies of the statement of purpose are given to those working in the adoption service, childcare team managers and social workers involved with the adoption process. A copy is given to all prospective adopters and adopters in Wiltshire and all birth parents, guardians and of children placed for adoption.
6. It is available on the Wiltshire Council website.

### **Mission Statement**

7. Wiltshire's Adoption Service is committed to providing high quality standards of care to looked after and adopted children in order to maximise their life chances and ensure that they have the opportunity to achieve each of the Every Child Matters five outcomes.
8. The Adoption Service aims to:
  - Provide a range of safe, secure and enduring adoptive placements to meet the assessed needs of children needing adoptive placements in order to promote and safeguard their welfare.
  - Ensure that adoptive placements promote stability and positive outcomes for children by working in partnership with adopted children, adoptive parents, birth families and other professionals in the adoption and adoption support processes.
  - Fully develop the role of corporate parenting in achieving positive outcomes for children needing permanent placements in line with the council's objectives.

## **Aims of the Adoption Service**

9. Our overall aim is to help children and young people who are adopted to attain the highest possible standards of health, development and educational attainment.
  - To ensure that the Safety needs, wishes and welfare of the child are at all times kept at the centre of the adoption process.
  - To ensure that where it is not possible for children to live safely with their birth families they are provided with a permanent, stable, alternative family through adoption or special guardianship.
  - To ensure that people who are interested in becoming adoptive parents, including those wishing to adopt a child from overseas, couples whether married or not, gay or lesbian and single people, from any ethnic background are welcomed without prejudice. They will be responded to promptly and given clear information about recruitment, assessment, and approval and support services.
  - To ensure that birth families are treated fairly, openly and with respect throughout the adoption process and have access to independent counselling and adoption support services.
  - To ensure that the timescales set out in Regulations are met, wherever possible and where it is not possible the reasons must be clearly recorded.
  - Our performance against the achievement of these timescales is monitored.
  
10. Objectives of the Adoption Service:
  - To increase the number of children adopted from the care system, in line with government targets.
  - To recruit a sufficient pool of prospective adopters to offer placement choice in order to meet the assessed needs of the children needing adoptive families.
  - To develop a range of adoption support services, including practical, financial and therapeutic services, in partnership with other relevant agencies, in order to support adoptive placements and avoid placement breakdowns.
  - To ensure that the adoption agency employs staff with appropriate and sufficient skills, knowledge and experience to deliver the adoption service.
  - To ensure that applicants for inter-country adoption are provided with an appropriate service from skilled and experienced workers.
  - The adoption team works in close partnership with colleagues across Children's Social Care to ensure that delays in achieving permanence are avoided.
  - To ensure that the lifelong implications of adoption are recognised and it is acknowledged that they may require a range of services to meet the needs of individuals at different stages of the process
  - To ensure that adoptive parents will be supported and valued through the process of recruitment, matching, placement and beyond, based on assessed need.
  - To ensure that birth families wishing to seek information about an adopted relative are provided with an appropriate service from skilled and experienced workers.

## **Policies & Procedures**

11. Wiltshire Council Adoption Agency joined together with a number of other local authorities, through the South West Adoption Consortium, SWAC, to produce procedures for the provision of adoption and adoption support services. These are used by staff via Wiltshire's intranet. The procedures cover all of the agency's activities for children, adopters, birth

relatives, step-parent adopters and inter-country adopters and their children and are updated annually to reflect developments in practice.

## **Safeguarding & Promoting Welfare**

12. The Local Safeguarding Children's Board provide the procedural framework for safeguarding children in Wiltshire and the adoption agency ensures that staff and managers attend child protection training and comply with good practice and guidance. Safeguarding issues are also part of the training programme for Adoption panel members.

## **Principles of the Service**

### 13. The Child

- The child's welfare is paramount in all decisions about her/his future.
- The child's wishes and feelings should be ascertained and taken into consideration, according to their age and understanding.
- Every child is entitled to a permanent family throughout their childhood, which should meet all the needs of the child in terms of religion, ethnicity, language, physical, social and emotional development and that promotes a supportive lifelong relationship.
- Children and young people should not be in public care throughout their childhood.
- A child's birth heritage, religious, cultural and linguistic background are all important factors to consider in finding a new family. The adoptive family should reflect this, if this can be found without unnecessary delay. No child should be denied loving adoptive parents solely on the grounds that the child and parents do not share the same racial or cultural background.
- All children who have adoption as their plan receive a copy of the children's guide to adoption.
- All children placed for adoption receive a copy of the children's guide to adoption support "growing up in your adopted family".

### 14. The Birth Family

- The local authority will work in partnership with birth families to ensure that effective plans are made and implemented for their child.
- Every child is entitled to information about her/his birth family in order to promote her/his sense of identity.
- There will be arrangements for ongoing contact, direct or indirect, between the child and birth family unless this would not be in the child's best interests.
- The birth family's wishes and feelings should be ascertained and taken into consideration at all stages in the process.

### 15. The Adopters

- All adoptive applicants will be treated fairly, openly and with respect throughout the adoption process.
- Priority for undertaking assessments will be given to those with the skills and experience to meet the needs of the children requiring adoption.
- Every effort will be made to find adoptive homes where brothers and sisters can live together, unless this will not meet their individually assessed needs. Where this is not possible, the reasons for the decision to separate them will be clearly recorded on the child's file.

- Adoptive parents and prospective adopters should be consulted with, provided with information, their views sought and taken into account throughout the process.
- Adoption support services should be provided, as appropriate, to promote the stability of placements and ensure good outcomes for children.

16. General

- The local authority will work in partnership with other agencies to ensure that the needs of all parties in the adoption process are met.
- All the parties to the adoption process are entitled to an assessment of their need for adoption support services, including financial support.
- All the parties to the adoption process will have access to the Department's Complaints procedure.

**Management Structure in Wiltshire**

17. All the managers in the adoption service are suitably qualified and experienced in line with the requirements of the Adoption & Children Act 2002. All have completed or are in the process of completing management training courses.
18. The Service Director of the Children & Families Branch has overall responsibility for the adoption service in Wiltshire. The Service Director is one of the Adoption Agency Decision Makers and the Adoption Support Services Adviser (delegated to the Adoption Team Manger).
19. The adoption service is located within the Department for Children and Education. The Head of Children in Care has management responsibility for the adoption service.
20. The Adoption Team Manager has line-management responsibility for the Adoption Assistant Team Manager, Adoption Support Co-ordinators, Adoption Social Workers and responsibility for the operational development of the adoption service.
21. The Adoption Support Co-ordinators have line-management responsibility for the Adoption Support Workers.

Name	Designation
Carolyn Godfrey	Corporate Director
	Service Director, Children's Social Care
Lin Hitchman	Head of Children in Care
Andrea Viner	Adoption Team Manager
Jackie Hatschek	Assistant Team Manager Adoption
	Qualified Social Workers
Marion Hunt	Adoption Support Co-ordinator
Sally Hughes	Adoption Support Co-ordinator
Denise O'Connor	Adoption Social Workers
Alison Lewis	
Julie Pearce	
Fiona brown	
Charlotte Gilbertson	
Leonie McKenna	
Jill Vincent	

Ann Mazzotta	Unqualified Adoption Support Worker
Sharron Smith	Unqualified Adoption Support Worker

22. All the Managers, Adoption Social Workers and Adoption Support Co-ordinators hold the minimum social work qualification have had a minimum of 2 years' experience in children & families social work or closely related field.
23. The Adoption Team Manager holds an MASW in social work and has extensive experience in childcare social work practice, family placement and permanence / adoption work. She also holds management qualification to level 6 and has been the manager of the specialist adoption service since it was set up in 2010.
24. There are three agency decision makers in Wiltshire: the service director for children's social care and the two heads of service for community safeguarding services.

### **Operational Functions**

25. The centrally based countywide Adoption Team delivers all of the adoption services for Wiltshire.
26. Within the team there is a dedicated Adoption Support Service that is responsible for providing and developing adoption support services in Wiltshire, including for Special Guardianship.
27. The Independent Reviewing Service has responsibility for monitoring the implementation of children's adoption plans, conducting the LAC reviews until the Adoption Order is made, ensuring the timescales are adhered to.
28. A Home finder Management Group meets every three months to oversee the home finding process, track the progress of individual children and adopters in order to expedite placements and to review the effectiveness of the Home finding process. The group is chaired by the Adoption Team Manager and membership includes representatives from the two fostering teams.
29. The Home finder booklet is produced every two months with stop press releases in between to avoid delay in matching and placement.
30. Wiltshire provides a comprehensive set of adoption procedures for staff to assist them in their adoption work. The procedures are available on the intranet, which means they can be easily and regularly updated in line with changes in legislation and practice.
31. The Adoption Agency has contracts with Voluntary Adoption Support Agencies to provide complementary services to those provided in-house. PACT (Parents and Children Together) provides adoption support services to birth families, adopted adults and adoptive families.
32. The Agency is a member of Adoption UK and purchases targeted services at specific needs identified, such as training for social workers and adopters. The Agency pays for membership to Adoption UK for the first year for adopters as support.
33. The Agency has a contract with PACT to provide inter-country adoption services, including assessment, training, reviewing and adoption support.

34. All staff are provided with a thorough induction and support from experienced and skilled managers to promote these values and to work within the Council's equal opportunities policies.
35. Staff are also provided with the Council's whistle blowing policy as part of their induction and this makes clear the responsibility for all staff to report areas of poor practice.

### **Strategic and Developmental Function**

36. Wiltshire is a member of the South West Adoption Consortium (SWAC), which is a consortium of local authorities and Voluntary Adoption Support Agencies (VASAs) and is used to share resources to increase the range of placement possibilities for children and adopters, and for the sharing of good practice. They produce the 'e-Link book', which features children needing adoption placements. The Adoption Team Manager is the link person with the Consortium and attends quarterly and other regional meetings.
37. SWAC also has regular regional group meetings for Panel Chairs, Panel Advisers and Adoption Support staff. Wiltshire has representation on all of these groups, to share issues, good practice and disseminate relevant information.
38. Wiltshire is a member of the British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF). It provides a quarterly information pack, including details of training events, publications and practice notes. It provides licences for the printing and use of nationally recognised adoption forms. It publishes a bi-monthly newspaper 'Be My Parent' and has a Be My Parent Online Service, which feature the more difficult to place children needing adoptive placements. There are local Trainer/Consultants who are available to provide training, advice and guidance on specific issues. The Adoption Team Manager is the link person with BAAF and attends quarterly and other regional meetings.
39. Wiltshire subscribes to Adoption UK and receives quarterly journals and a 'Children Who Wait' magazine featuring children needing placements for adoption.
40. Wiltshire joins all newly approved gay and lesbian adopters to New Family Social as part of the support package.

### **The Adoption Panel and Central list**

41. The current central list of potential Adoption Panel members is made up of:-
  - an Independent Chair
  - Two vice chairs
  - Three social workers with at least 3 years relevant experience in child care social work, including direct experience in adoption work.
  - Two elected members of the authority, from the corporate parenting group.
  - The Agency's Medical Advisers
  - 1 agency members from specialist field
  - 5 independent members (all with personal experience of adoption).
42. Panel member's annual reviews ensure that the diversity, flexibility and knowledge base of the panel is promoted and developed.

43. The Independent Chair is independent from the day to day management of the adoption service.
44. The Agency has a Legal Adviser to the Adoption Panel who provides written legal advice and may attend if requested to do so but is not a member of the Panel.
45. There is also an Agency Adviser to the Panel who is not a Panel member but should attend Panel meetings as its adviser. He or she should be able to contribute to Panel meetings by raising issues and providing advice, for example about the Agency's procedures and practices.
46. The Adoption Panel Administrator is responsible for taking the minutes of the meetings and undertaking the other administrative aspects of the Panel's work.
47. The Agency provides an annual training day for Panel members and Adoption Agency staff. Panel members are also offered opportunities to attend other relevant internal and external training events.

### **Adoption Panel Function**

48. The adoption panel in Wiltshire currently meets twice per month these meetings are book in a year in advance, extra panel meetings are arranged as required.
49. The Panel's main function is to make recommendations to one of the Agency's Decision-Makers (the Service Director, Children's Social Care or the Head of Service Community Safeguarding), who makes the Agency decision on the following matters:-
  - whether a child should be placed for adoption
  - whether a prospective adopter is suitable to adopt a child
  - Whether a child should be placed for adoption with a particular prospective adopter.
50. The Panel must also consider and may give advice to the Agency on:
  - the Agency's proposals for the provision of adoption support services to the adoptive family
  - the arrangement the Agency proposes to make for allowing any person contact with the child
  - whether an application should be made by the Agency for a Placement Order
  - Whether the parental responsibility of any parent or guardian or the prospective adopter should be restricted and if so the extent of the restriction.
51. In considering the recommendation to make, the Panel must bear in mind that the **welfare of the child is the paramount consideration** and:-
  - shall take into account and give consideration to all reports and information passed to the Panel
  - shall request any further information that the Panel considers necessary
  - shall obtain legal and medical advice on each case presented to Panel
  - Should consider whether all other possible options for care of the child have been explored and discounted.
52. The Panel is required to keep minutes of its meetings and a written record of any recommendations it makes and the reasons for them. The Panel receives regular update reports on children and adopters who have been to Panel, in order to track their progress.

53. As part of its monitoring function, the Panel considers, at quarterly intervals, a spreadsheet and brief report detailing the position of all the children and adopters currently in the adoption process.
54. The adoption panel chair and agency adviser feedback to the agency at 6 monthly intervals regarding the quality of adoption practice seen by the panel.

### **The Agency Decision**

55. In line with regulations prospective adopters, birth parents and the child must be notified of the agency decision verbally within 2 days and in writing within 7 working days of the agency decision maker receiving a copy of the final minutes.

### **Adoption Panel**

56. There is an annual training day for the Adoption Panel, which helps to ensure Panel members are kept up-to-date with current issues in adoption. In meeting the requirements of the National Minimum Adoption Standards, part of this day involves a session with the Agency's adoption managers and staff.
57. The Agency Decision Maker/s meets with the Adoption Panel twice per year and will pick up on any issues of concern raised by Panel members.  
A spreadsheet showing the current position and progress of all the children and adopters in the process is shared and discussed with the panel and the Agency Decision Maker/s.
58. All Panel members are required to undergo an annual review of their performance.
59. The Agency Decision-Maker meets every six months with the Panel Chair and Agency Adviser to discuss issues connected with Panel business, including developmental, quality control and any other issues of concern.
60. The agency adviser meets every six months with the agency medical advisers and the legal adviser to discuss issues arising from panel business and shared processes.
61. The Adoption Panel has a system for receiving feedback from applicants who attend Panel, children's social workers and Adoption social workers, which are discussed at subsequent Panels and suggestions for improvements to Panel's practice are considered.

### **Services Provided**

62. As an Adoption Agency, Wiltshire provides a range of adoption services to children needing adoption, prospective adopters, adoptive parents, birth parents, birth families, adopted adults and the general public. These services are provided by:
  - The Adoption Team recruit, train, assess and provide support to prospective adoptive parents.
  - The Adoption Team provides a counselling service for adopted adults who wish to find out information about their adoption.

- The Adoption Team, through the contract with a Voluntary Adoption Support Agency (VASA), provides an intermediary service for birth relatives and adopted adults who wish to trace each other.
- The Adoption Team allocates an Adoption Social Worker to act as the 'nominated home-finder' for children needing adoptive placements.
- The Adoption Team provides a consultation service to the childcare teams on matters relating to adoption placements.
- The Adoption Team, through a contract with an external provider offers a full range of services to step-parents who wish to adopt, including the preparation of a report for court.
- The Adoption Team, through a contract with PACT offers a full range of services to inter-country adopters including adoption support.
- Childcare teams are responsible for ensuring that the child's Life-story Work and Later Life Letter are completed by the time of the Adoption Order.
- Childcare teams are responsible for managing direct contact arrangements between children and their birth families, pre and post Adoption Order.

### **Adoption Website**

63. Wiltshire Council has an adoption website [www.wiltshireadoption.org.uk](http://www.wiltshireadoption.org.uk) to provide information on the adoption service, including:

- Services for children who need adoption
- Becoming an adoptive parent (including an online enquiry form)
- The Adoption Support Service
- Accessing your adoption records (adopted adults)
- Tracing an adopted person (intermediary service for birth relatives)
- Tracing your birth relatives (intermediary service for adopted adults)
- Special Guardianship
- Inter-country adoption
- Step-parent Adoption

### **Adoption Support Service**

64. The Adoption Support service has a range of services in place to support adoptive families and their children including counselling, advice and information, workshops/support groups, family days and events, an annual conference, a newsletter, financial support and links with Wiltshire's Educational team and CAMHS.
65. The service also has links with various independent adoption support agencies and is in the process of developing a parenting course for Wiltshire adopters and special guardians.
66. Wiltshire have a partnership contract for adoption support with PACT (Parents and Children Together) this compliments in-house adoption support services and is a flexible contract to allow the agency to respond to complex and varied support needs appropriately and effectively.

67. Contact is promoted as a positive experience for the child and as maintaining an important connection with the child's past for their future identity. An allocated adoption social worker provides support to birth relatives and adoption support provides this for adopters. An independent social worker specialising in birth relative support is offered to birth parents or other relatives who are losing a child/ren to adoption. This worker is provided through PACT and supported through adoption support partnership working with the Wiltshire adoption support co-ordinators. Birth parents, siblings and grandparents are offered individual and occasionally group work.
68. Wiltshire Council supports ongoing contact arrangements as required. There is a designated worker within the adoption team who manages direct contact arrangements post-adoption. The adoption support co-ordinators manage indirect contact arrangements.
69. The Adoption Support Service facilitates both direct and indirect contact (through the post-box service) between birth families, children and significant others.
70. The adoption service provides post adoption counselling and support for adopted people living in Wiltshire. Learning from this informs current practice development.
71. PACT provide an intermediary service for adopted Wiltshire residents, and an intermediary service for birth relatives who are care leavers and have an adopted sibling. Individual and some group work are offered for young people touched by adoption.
72. The Adoption Support service has developed Life Story work practice and provided workshops for staff, adopters and birth family to ensure that all adopters have a high quality life story book for their child and all adopted children have their life history recorded in an accessible, high quality and flexible format.
73. The Adoption Support Service undertakes assessments of need for adoption support, including financial support. The Adoption Support Service also undertakes assessments of need for Special Guardianship support services.
74. The Adoption Support Service is also responsible for:
  - developing a range of adoption support services to meet the needs of adopted children and adoptive families e.g. support groups, newsletters and training for adopters and staff
  - preparing Adoption Support Plans for children and reviewing the plans at regular intervals, including financial support, as required
  - accessing specialist therapeutic help for children
  - accessing counselling and advice for adoptive parents
  - managing the post-box service (to enable adopted children to maintain indirect contact with their birth families)
  - reviewing direct contact arrangements
  - enabling the access to universal services and benefits for those involved in adoption.
  - organising training events and conferences for adopters and staff
  - providing practical help and support to adoptive families
  - Preparing Special guardianship support plans and reviewing them as required.
  - Providing support to birth relatives acting as a single point of contact to provide information and advice to adopters, adopted young people, birth relatives and special guardians.

## **Systems for monitoring and evaluating adoption services**

75. An annual report and a 6 monthly interim report are presented to the senior management group and Elected Members, detailing the performance of the Adoption Agency.
76. The supervision and annual appraisal system for all staff assures the monitoring of individual performance and identification of training needs to compensate for any gaps in knowledge.
77. A File Audit system is in place for managers to regularly check on the quality of children's adoption records, adopters' files, adoption support modules and home finding files, to ensure that all departmental policies and procedures are being followed.
78. Training on adoption issues is part of the 'training pathway' for staff involved in adoption work and staff complete post-training evaluation forms, which feed into reports produced by the Staff Development Team.
79. The Senior Independent Reviewing Officer produces 6 monthly reports on the work of the Service, including the progress on permanence plans being achieved.
80. An Adoption Recruitment Strategy is in place to identify and inform recruitment needs for adoptive parents, based on the profile of the children needing adoption. This is reviewed and updated annually and is being used to inform our prioritisation principles for assessing applicants.
81. The Adoption Team routinely review and evaluate the quality of the Adoption and Permanence training courses for adoptive applicants, including seeking and collating feedback from applicants.
82. Contracts with VASAs are reviewed 6 monthly and statistics provided quarterly to monitor performance, quality of service and ensure value for money. Feedback system is in place for adopters attending training sessions including information sessions and permanence training.
83. The Home-finder Management Group meets quarterly to track and monitor the children and adopters currently in the adoption process, with particular focus on suggesting ways forward those without an identified placement.
84. Adoption service targets are reviewed annually.

## **The Service to Prospective Adopters**

85. The procedures for recruiting, preparing, assessing, approving and supporting prospective adopters are set out in detail in our Adoption Agency procedures, which are available on the intranet. In brief the process is as follows:
  - All enquiries regarding adoption are welcome; the adoption team operate an open and inclusive enquiry process. All enquirers speak with a specialist adoption worker. There is access to information about adoption and to the adoption team via an enquiry line, via the website or via direct office number.
    - Within 5 working days of their enquiry, all enquirers are sent an information pack about adoption, including:

- a letter of invitation to attend an Information Session
  - our information leaflet for prospective adopters
  - our policy with regard to smoking
  - the leaflet on adoption
  - our criteria for prioritising assessments
  - Information about the complaints procedure
  - The statement of purpose
  - Information about the Independent Reviewing Mechanism
- Enquirers are invited to attend an Information Session about adoption, to meet adopters and Adoption Social Workers. The session provides the opportunity to learn more about adoption and about the necessity for us to prioritise applications, to meet the needs of the type of children requiring adoption (i.e. older children with challenging behaviour, sibling groups and children with special needs). Information sessions are held at least every 2 months.
  - All applicants have to meet the standard requirements set out in the regulations, there are no automatic exclusions. Our own prioritisation principles based upon the needs of the children needing adoptive placements may include giving priority to applicants who:
    - Are prepared to consider a child up to five years of age or more
    - Wish to be considered for a sibling group of two or more children.
    - Are open to contact with birth families
    - Might consider a child with complex needs or disability
  - Those interested in knowing more are invited to complete an Adoption Enquiry Form and, if they meet the current prioritisation requirements, an Initial Assessment will be offered.
  - Those wishing to proceed to the next stage and assessed as suitable to proceed through the initial assessment process, are asked to complete a formal application form and are allocated an Adoption Social Worker to work with them throughout the assessment process, which involves a number of home visits, CRB and other checks, references and a full medical. The adoption social worker will keep applicants updated at all times regarding their approval process.
  - Applicants are invited to attend a Preparation Course during their assessment process, which provides more detailed information and helps people decide whether adoption is for them. The preparation training includes other adopters, the views of adopted children and birth parents perspectives.
  - The assessment must be completed and presented to the Adoption Panel within a maximum of 8 months of the receipt of the formal application form.
  - Applicants receive a copy of their completed assessment report and are invited to comment on it, within 10 working days of the panel meeting.
  - Applicants are invited to attend Adoption Panel when their approval is being considered. Their Adoption Social Worker will help to prepare them for attendance and will provide them with a leaflet about the Adoption Panel.

- The Panel will make a recommendation as to whether the applicants are suitable to be approved as adopters. The Panel must consider and may give matching advice to the Agency about the number of children, age range, gender, likely needs and background that the prospective adopters may be suitable to adopt.
- After the Agency Decision-Maker has made the decision on their approval, based on the Panel's recommendation the prospective adopters must be notified of the decision verbally within 2 days and in writing within 7 working days of the agency decision maker receiving a final copy of the panel minutes.
- If the applicants are not deemed suitable, they will be able to have the decision reviewed by the Independent Reviewing Mechanism. A detailed letter setting out the reasons for the decision will be sent to the applicants.
- Following their approval, the prospective adopters' Adoption social worker keeps in touch with them and ensures they have access to information about the children needing placements (through the "*Home-finder*" newsletter ).
- If no child has been placed with them within a year, there must be a review of their approval as suitable to adopt. After the review the prospective adopters must be informed whether they remain suitable to adopt.
- When a 'link' with a child is identified, the Adoption Support Co-ordinator will make an assessment of the adoption support needs of the placement, together with the child's social worker, the adopters and their social worker.
- This information is incorporated into the Adoption Support Plan which, together with the Adoption Placement Report, is presented to Adoption Panel when the formal 'match' is being considered.
- Adopters may also request an assessment for adoption support services at any future point, following the making of an Adoption Order. The assessment will be conducted by an Adoption Support Co-ordinator and the Department has the discretion to decide whether to provide adoption support services.

86. Wiltshire adoption service fully subscribes to the Adopters Charter which was published by the children's minister Tim Loughton 2011.

### **The Complaints Procedure**

87. In seeking to constantly improve the quality of the adoption service, the Department for Children and Education welcomes and encourages feedback from service users, providers and partners.
88. The Department recognises that children, their, birth parents, adoptive parents and prospective adopters are best placed to identify the strengths and deficiencies of the adoption service and, therefore, to inform the changes and developments needed to ensure continuing improvement.
89. There is a clear, robust framework in place for responding to and ensuring that the views of the parties to the adoption process are heard and the Children's Guide provides information to children about how to make a complaint.

90. In most adoption situations, areas of potential tension or conflict can be minimised through careful planning, open communication and early discussion/negotiation involving the child's social worker, the adopters' Social Worker, the Adoption Support Co-ordinator, as appropriate.
91. Any of the parties to the adoption process can use the Children Act Complaints Procedure if they have a dissatisfaction or concern with the service provided. This includes a complaint by:
- any child who has been placed for adoption by Wiltshire Council (including adults who were formerly adopted)
  - a birth parent of a child who has been or is being adopted
  - adoptive parents
  - prospective adoptive parents during the preparation/assessment process and after approval whilst awaiting a placement
  - one person on behalf of another e.g. an adoptive parent on behalf of an adopted child.
92. Advice on making a complaint can be sought from the Customer Complaints Manager at Wiltshire Council who can be contacted on Tel: 01225 718446 / 713020.
93. There is a leaflet available for children and young people, which explains the complaints process and how to make a complaint. Information regarding complaints, comments and seeking advice is contained in the children's guide to adoption and the children's guide to adoption support.

### **The Registration Authority**

94. Ofsted is an independent non-governmental public body responsible for monitoring, regulating and inspecting adoption services, under the provisions of the Care Standards Act 2000. Their aim is to "inspect and regulate to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people and in education and skills for learners of all ages".
95. The address of the local Ofsted area office is:

Ofsted South Regional Centre  
Freshford House  
Redcliffe Way  
Bristol BS1 6NL

The national Ofsted address is:  
Ofsted  
Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Ann's Square  
Manchester M2 7LA

Email: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

Tel: 08456 404045 about education, adult skills, or local authority children's services

Tel: 08456 404040 about anything else

Minicom /TTD: 0161 618 8524

**Appendix 3:  
Adoption Panel statistics 2011 - 2012**

**Children:**

		2010/2011	2011/2012
<b>Should be Placed for Adoption</b>			
<b>Legal Status at That Time</b>			
	Section 20	1	4
	Interim Care Order	11	22
	Care Order	3	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>27</b>

		2010/2011	2011/2012
<b>Should be Placed for Adoption</b>			
<b>Ethnic Origin</b>			
	White British	15	24
	Mixed/Other	6	3

		2010/2011	2011/2012
<b>Should be Placed for Adoption</b>			
<b>Age</b>			
	0-12 Months	6	5
	12-24 Months	6	4
	2-4 Years	2	15
	5-10 Years	1	3
	11 Years and Over	0	0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>27</b>

		2010/2011	2011/2012
<b>Children Matched</b>			
<b>Age</b>			
	0-12 Months	4	2
	12-24 Months	3	5
	2-4 Years	6	10
	5-10 Years	7	2
	11 Years and Over	0	0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>19</b>

		2010/2011	2011/2012
<b>Children Matched</b>			
<b>Ethnic Origin</b>			
	White British	18	17
	Mixed / Other Ethnicity	4	2

		2010/2011	2011/2012

SWAC Matches			
		0	1
		2010/2011	2011/2012
Nat. Adoption Register Matches			
		0	0
		2010/2011	2011/2012
Children Matched Out Of County			
		3	0
		2010/2011	2011/2012
Children for Whom Adoption Achieved by Age at Adoption Order			
<b>Aged</b>			
	0-12 Months	0	1
	12-24 Months	2	2
	2-4 Years	6	12
	5-10 Years	6	2
	11 Years and Over	1	0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>17</b>
		2010/2011	2011/2012
Adoption Order by Ethnic Origin of Child			
<b>Ethnic Origin</b>			
	White British	14	15
	Mixed / Other Ethnicity	0	2
		2010/2011	2011/2012
Rescission of Decision to Place for Adoption			
		5	5
		2010/2011	2011/2012
Formally Placed for Adoption within 12 Months of Decision that they Should be Placed for Adoption			
		12	13
<b>Adopters:</b>			
		2010/2011	2011/2012
Adopters Approved			
		20	17
		2010/2011	2011/2012
Adopters Approved; Ethnic Origin			
Ethnic Origin of Individuals			
	White British	38	29
	Mixed/Other Ethnicity	2	2

		2010/2011	2011/2012
Approved Adopters; Relationships of Adopters			
	Single	0	2
	Married/Co-Habiting	19	15
	Civil Partnership	1	0

		2010/2011	2011/2012
Approved Adopters that Have Withdrawn			
		1	0

		2010/2011	2011/2012
Rescission of Approval by Panel			
			3

		2010/2011	2011/2012
Brief Assessments			
		1	0

## **Appendix 4: Adoption Agency Update Report 1<sup>st</sup> April 2012 – 1<sup>st</sup> October 2012**

### **Introduction**

1. The 2011 Statutory Adoption Guidance and the 2011 Adoption Minimum Standards place a requirement on local authority adoption services to ensure that the executive side of the Council receives a written report on the management, outcomes and financial state of the adoption agency to satisfy themselves that the agency is effective and is achieving good outcomes for children and/or service users. They must also satisfy themselves that the agency is complying with the conditions of registration (Minimum Standard 25.6; Statutory Adoption Guidance 3.3, and 5.39). This report has been prepared to enable them to do so and update them on the activity within the adoption agency so far for the year 2012/13.
2. The 2011 Adoption Minimum Standards can be accessed at <https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/Adoption-NMS.pdf>
3. The 2011 Statutory Adoption Guidance can be accessed at <http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/a/statutory%20guidance.pdf>
4. So far this year has been a very busy year for the adoption agency in relation to the increase numbers of children with adoption as their permanency plan and also in relation to enquiries from prospective adopters. In relation to the latter, it appears that a combination of 'drip drip' marketing and publicity as a result of the Government's agenda in relation to adoption has meant that we have had a higher number of enquiries than at this point in the previous year, 82 so far. To enable the assessment of a larger more diverse pool of adopters to meet the growing needs of the children requiring placement we are contemplating commissioning out some assessments of prospective adopters to independent social workers in order to respond to increasing demand and to ensure assessments are completed in a timely manner and we are confident that we will exceed 2011/12 approvals in 2012/13, with 20 sets of adopters approved so far this year and 23 assessments in process.
5. This does raise a potential resource issue for the adoption service regarding training and supporting adopters and adoptive families. Assessment and approval is only part of the process, other parts of the service remain in-house and require increased resources, particularly adoption support resources.
6. Work is under way and needs to be continued regarding priorities for assessment.
7. It has also been a busy year for national development and local scrutiny / inspection. Both have been continuous throughout the last 6 months.
8. As previously reported the government published the Children in Care and Adoption performance tables for England in late 2011 and included 3 key performance indicators on for adoption; the % of adoptions from care; % of special guardianship orders from care; and, % of adopted children placed within 12 months of decision that a child should be adopted.
9. The scorecard publication was set against the backdrop of the Government adoption action plan: tackling delay, and the drive for a sense of urgency in the placement of children for adoption.

10. In March 2012 Ofsted carried out an inspection of Wiltshire Council Safeguarding and Looked After Children's services. The inspection looked at the contribution made by relevant services to ensure that children and young people are properly safeguarded and the quality of service provision for looked after children and care leavers. The adoption team was involved in this inspection regarding edge of care provision. The report highlighted areas where the service was found to be inadequate as well as areas where the service is both adequate and outstanding. A number of recommendations were made and the council and all the public sector partners involved in the safeguarding and the looked after children service continue to work together to make improvements. Action was taken immediately and the Council committed resources to ensure children and young people in Wiltshire receive the best possible care and support.
11. The Government published the revised Adoption Scorecards in May 2012 which allow authorities to measure their performance and compare against others. These include key indicators measuring how swiftly children are placed for adoption, with government thresholds set for 2 indicators measuring the time it takes for a child from entering care to moving in with his or her adoptive family and the time it takes to match a child to a family following the court decision regarding a placement order.
12. Wiltshire's performance in the 2008/11 scorecard was below the national average for the number of days between a child first coming into care and moving in with their adoptive family (placement for adoption) the threshold was met for the time between the LA receiving a placement order or consent to place a child for adoption and the child moving in with their adoptive family. The scorecard raised concerns about delays for children in achieving adoption particularly when set alongside the length of time care proceedings were taking in the local court.
13. The data used in the scorecard was historical and it was noted related to a time before Wiltshire had a specialist adoption service. There were 4 cases in particular where delayed progression was impacting on adoption performance scores in 2012. The analysis of individual cases was very useful and highlighted areas of potential delay to tackle and monitor. Out of 50 in the cohort (2008/11), 25 were not placed within 625 days (England 3 year average). Each of the 25 cases has been considered on a case-by-case basis, to see if there are any recurring themes. Within the 25 there were a number of themes identified that had caused delay:
  - Sibling groups, some of whom needed to be placed together and some of whom didn't. This needed to be assessed and a clear decision made regarding how the children were to be placed and therefore the adoption placement required.
  - Complex needs of individual children and young people causing delays with finding appropriate adopters, linking and matching (e.g. complex health needs, challenging behavior and oppositional behavior).
  - Legal complexities where parents absent themselves from proceedings and/or where family members come forward to offer to care for a child at a late stage in the process thus delaying legal progression.
  - Legal delays caused by lack of court time and/or legal availability.
  - Repeated expert assessments ordered by courts regarding parenting skills/slow appointment of experts causing delays in legal progression.
  - Large number of assessments which haven't been carried out by Social Workers in a timely way and to the quality/standard expected by the Courts. This can mean that at the point of a child being placed for adoption, a Social Worker needs to go back and do more work. Better management oversight of Social Workers has already been identified

as a priority following the Ofsted inspection and forms part of the Social Care Improvement Plan. Better IRO oversight of the child's plan is also a priority.

14. Some of the children in these cases were affected by several of these delay factors.
15. Wiltshire's 3 year average between 2008-2011 of days between entering care and moving in with adoptive family is 803. This is above the England average of 625 and above the Department for Education (DfE) threshold for 2010/13 of 639. Provisional Data for 2009/12 shows an improving picture. There are a number of reasons for our performance 2008/11. The first is to do with complexities in individual cases. The second reason is to do with delays happening at identifiable stages within the process between the date a child becomes LAC and the date of moving in with their adoptive family. The 2009/12 cohort includes 3 young people where delays are known: 1 due largely to complex health needs/life limiting illness; and 2 due to complex legalities due to kinship inter-country adoption. If these 3 young people are taken out of the cohort, the provisional 3 year average drops further to 627 days (above the England average by only 2 days but below the threshold). It is important to that note that many, if not all, Local Authorities will have similar cases which will affect their timeliness and are not a reflection of poor practice but rather reflective of the complexity of some cases.
16. In response to the scorecard information immediate changes and additions were made to adoption team practice to improve the pace of adoption applications. The team also immediately began to offer increased consultation to colleagues involved in placing children for adoption and regarding adoption support.
17. In May 2012 Wiltshire Council adoption services were offered and agreed to be the pilot authority for the diagnostic assessment developed to support local authorities to explore how delay can be minimised for children who need permanence through adoption.
18. The diagnostic team was in Wiltshire for 5 days and met with the adoption service, members of the safeguarding teams, the County Solicitor, the fostering service manager, Independent Reviewing Officers, the Adoption Panel Chair and two groups of adopters. They considered a small number of case files and spoke to other adopters and birth mothers by telephone. They also had the benefit of the recent Ofsted inspection report on safeguarding and looked after children services, the Safeguarding Improvement Plan, a review of the Independent Safeguarding Unit, the Children in Care Commissioning Plan, and a briefing on the 2012 Wiltshire Adoption Scorecard together with a draft Improvement Plan.
19. Over the course of the week the diagnostic team reported having met with positive and engaged staff, who told us that they were aware that there had been a lack of clear and purposeful planning for children in need and/or care in Wiltshire but that things had been improving since a restructure into specialist teams in 2010, and that there had been additional acceleration to the change agenda since the Ofsted Inspection in March 2012.
20. The assessors were impressed by the high morale of the Adoption Team and their enthusiastic and creative approach to the recruitment, assessment, training and support of carers, and their openness to ideas for improvement. They noted that staff were able to offer individualised support packages for adoptive placements as well as a wide range of group support, and that some of this activity is part of the team development plan (Child Appreciation Days for example). They commented that adoption team staff are informed about and keen to be involved in parallel planning for adoption at an early stage and that this sometimes worked well but is currently sporadic within the agency.

21. They came upon a number of examples of what they described as good and innovative practice: the Adoption Panel receives a summary of the LAC review for each child whose plan is adoption; the Panel also uses a spreadsheet to track the progress of children whose plan is adoption, prospective adopters and approved adopters; adopters spoke of assessments, once started, taking place in a timely way.
22. The feedback from the diagnostic assessment highlighted the following areas for improvement
- More rigorous and timely care planning with a focus on planning for permanency with clear outcomes for children
  - Reduced use of Section 20 CCA 1989 (voluntary accommodation)
  - Greater use of family group conferencing
  - Ensuring that parents are aware of what they need to do to change in order to protect their children and by when and not being over optimistic in relation to parenting capacity
  - Wiltshire has had a culture of family support and reunification that was embedded. This sometimes meant that there were too many Initial Assessments followed by brief interventions and case closure.
  - Case planning needed more rigor, focusing on clear outcomes. Staff were inclined to be over-optimistic about the capacity of some parents to make the changes necessary to parent their children adequately.
  - They were insufficiently focused on the cumulative impact of adverse care giving environments on the children experiencing them.
  - There was over-use of Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 as a route into care and pre-proceedings were often later than they should have been.
  - Reunification was seen as the best route to permanency even when it had been previously tried and failed.
  - Family Group Conferences they were not used often enough or early enough. This lack of rigorous planning for children described in the Ofsted report and confirmed to the diagnostic team by staff means that children often wait far too long while attempts are made to support their parents to care for them, thereby missing the chance to be placed at an earlier stage with adopters and reducing the positive outcomes for them.
  - The impression was that the cultural change was less rapid than the intellectual acknowledgement of the need for the change.
23. **Outcomes for birth families**
- Generally, parents do want the best for their children and an early discussion about adoption as a serious option for the child may help birth parents to recognise their limitations.
24. **Outcomes for adopters**
- Many adopters described very positive and supportive relationships with the Adoption Team, and had experienced high levels of adoption support after placement.
  - Some adopters spoke about delays, poor communication, an excessively complicated system even second time around.

## 25. **Vision, leadership and strategy**

- The diagnostic team was impressed by the clear vision of senior managers within the authority, and the support and commitment of elected members.

## 26. **Working together, within the authority, partners and other systems**

- It was felt that some front line workers did not think about permanence at an early enough stage. There is room for significant systemic improvement in how different teams within Children's Social Care Services work together. The Adoption Service already works closely at an early stage with some teams and some workers. This good practice needs to be rolled out across the operational teams.
- The Independent Reviewing Officers welcome their move into Performance and Commissioning, believing that this will give them more authority to challenge and drive plans for children. Their position in the structure would benefit from more clarity and influence.
- The Adoption Service described good relationships with PACT (Parents and Children Together), the voluntary organisation commissioned to work with birth families. Their work was praised by a birth parent.
- Legal and medical advice to panel was thought to be of a high standard and flexible in approach.
- There was seen to be a significant gap in the availability of CAMHS support specifically focused on adopted children and their parents. The local authority needs to outline clearly the type and level of support it considers is needed and consider how this should be funded.

## 27. **Managing resources**

- The diagnostic team was aware that the number of children becoming looked after has more than doubled since 2008 with consequent pressure on resources at all levels.
- Adoption is a cost effective resource for local authorities. It is also extremely effective in terms of positive outcomes for children, especially when children are placed with adopters at an early stage. If plans can be made for children in a timely and effective way, with due regard to the rights and support needs of birth families, and there is sufficient choice of skilled and supported adopters so that a suitable match can be made, then adoption is a very good use of resources.
- We heard from the Adoption Team of staff going long distances to do a focused assessment of possible adopters but there is evidence from adopters that the process for recruitment, assessment and training could be improved.

## 28. **Service delivery, workforce development and effective practice**

- There is a need for more robust and focused care planning for children at all stages in their career through the system. Plans are already underway to achieve this, including an investment in training and development.
- As with many authorities, specialist teams such as adoption, fostering, family support, away from the front-line, have experienced staff. Front-line operational teams are more likely to have newly qualified and less experienced staff.
- The diagnostic team identified some cultural, systemic and structural areas for improvement.

29. **Wiltshire Council responded to the diagnostic assessment report and proposed an action plan:**
- The permanency policy and guidance -would be signed off promptly at the Safeguarding Operational Improvement Group. There will be staff briefings on the policy and a robust plan for speedy implementation. There will be an emphasis on pace and high expectations.
  - Training event-there will be a training event by the end of June 2012 focusing on clear expectations on assessment, care planning and permanency.
  - A dedicated Home-finder will be appointed within the Adoption team and focus on finding families for individual children. Work on this had already begun.
  - As part of the review of the Independent Scrutiny Unit the level of Independent Reviewing Officers and Child Protection Chairs will be reviewed. IROs will take a pro-active role in the 2nd Review, track children in a systematic way and be expected to challenge and support operational staff.
  - The balance of staff in different teams will be reviewed.
  - There will be a workforce and training analysis to ensure a mix of staff with skill and expertise in planning for permanence especially at the front door. As part of the Referral and Assessment Improvement Plan additional capacity and experience has been recruited.
  - An adopter's Reference Group will be set up, with representatives of the local authority, partner agencies and adopters. Use their ongoing feedback and good ideas to improve services.
30. Immediately following the diagnostic assessment an improvement plan was put in place, in September the social care improvement notice was amended to include improvement in adoption practice stating that on the basis of evidence contained in:
- The adoption scorecard published by the Department of Education in May 2012.
  - The Outcomes UK diagnostic assessment of Wiltshire's adoption service dated May 2012.
31. The notice put in place the following measures required for the Council to comply with the further Improvement Notice 25.10.12.
32. The Council must work with their partners to take action to:
- Address the areas for consideration identified in the Outcomes UK diagnostic assessment to tackle delays in children being adopted, and
  - Put in place arrangements to sustain and build on the improvements secured.
33. As the result of all of the above national development and local scrutiny there is an improvement plan in place which is monitored on a monthly basis by the agency and by the Safeguarding Improvement Board (SIB), the plan is wholly reflective of all of the recommendations made.
34. Within one month of the date of the Improvement Notice, the Council had to agree a plan with the Improvement Board which would improve the performance of the adoption service and which addressed the concerns set out in the Outcomes UK Diagnostic Report and the Council's Adoption Scorecard. The plan set out milestone and performance indicators aimed at improving the performance of the adoption service and reducing delay. Progress against the performance indicator standards, targets and timescales must be reported at

each meeting of the SIB and action taken to address performance concerns and where standards, targets and timescales are not being met.

35. The noticed stressed that the Council should reduce the time taken to place a child for adoption from the point that the child comes into the care of the local authority. In doing so the Council should work towards meeting the timescales set out in The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations and Statutory Adoption Guidance revised in February 2011.
36. The draft Permanency and Adoption Improvement Plan is organised around 4 strategic improvement goals which are as follows:
  - Ensure timely and decisive permanency planning including long term placement stability.
  - Ensure robust systems and quality assurance processes are in place to monitor progress.
  - Ensure we have an adoption team with the right culture and skills and appropriate support.
  - Secure a customer focused adoption service by valuing adopters and prospective adopters.
37. In June 2012 the adoption team plan was further updated to include actions required identified in the adoption improvement plan and work began immediately on the developments required:
  - Continued development of the adopters charter- in process
  - Setting up of an adopters reference group-completed and meeting
  - Increased gathering and use of stakeholder feedback-in process
  - Review of recruitment and enquiry processes (linked to adoption action plan)-in development
  - Creating a specialist home finder post and procedure around this – completed and progressing
  - Setting up concurrent planning processes opportunities /fostering for adoption-in process
  - Improve recruitment/website/media support for adopters-in process
  - Embedding new practice regulations and guidance as they emerge over 2013/14
38. Over the last 3 months we have been developing 3 specialist posts to improve the services provided to children and carers:
  - Psychological hours to support foster carers and adopters, improve placement stability and adoption support
  - A specialist training post to embed training further for foster carers and adopters
  - A concurrency worker post - to develop placement services in line with the adoption action plan and improvement plan recommendations. It was noted at this stage that the recruitment, assessment, support and training of concurrent carers will place additional strain on staffing resources across fostering and adoption teams. It is hoped that this post will provide a seamless support service across both teams.
39. The job descriptions are written for these posts and they are currently being evaluated.
40. Work on the enquiry and recruitment processes has begun, the assistant team managers in the fostering and adoption teams are reviewing processes and developing practice. The document currently out for consultation regarding proposals for fostering and adoption

presents some challenges to existing models regarding the front door of placement services for enquirers and is quite prescriptive about how the enquiry (stage one) should be dealt with and the time scales for this. The model that seems to fit best with these proposals is a shared front door for fostering and adoption and concurrency, staffed by those who can answer questions about all of the caring options and can begin the initial assessment of applicants.

41. The adoption team manager and fostering services manager have undertaken developmental work regarding concurrency and dual approvals: looking at recruitment, models of practice, assessment and training tools. This will inform the future development of these areas of practice, increase the availability of this type of placement for children needing permanence and improve timeliness of placement for these children.
42. The adoption team has been working to further identify support services accessible to adoptive parents particularly those struggling with the complex behaviours of their (often early adolescent) children. Parenting programme and safe handling training have been identified and are being explored as options.
43. Although children's decisions have largely been removed from the panel function this has not reduced the amount of panel meetings to date. The adoption panel continues to meet twice per month with full agendas, considering approvals of prospective adopters and matching of children to adoptive families, the panel will continue to consider the adoption plans for children relinquished for adoption.
44. The adoption team has continued to have periods of being short staffed 2 further members of the team have resigned and an assistant team manager could not be recruited until 1.10.12. Latterly the adoption team manager has been recruited to a post outside Wiltshire Council and will be leaving in early December 2012.
45. There is currently a DfE document out for consultation regarding fostering and adoption practice. The document proposes several major changes to the preparation and assessment process for adoptive parents including to timescales and to adoption panel function, quoracy and QA role. The proposals in this document will bring with them major development work for adoption agencies going forward including the implementation of several new and scrutinised processes. The adoption team, fostering team and the adoption panel have been considering the consultation document and responding accordingly to the proposals.
46. The report to the safeguarding improvement board 2.10.12 outlined the progress made in implementing the Permanency and Adoption Improvement Plan. There had been a significant amount of activity across children's services since the previous (SIB) meeting and this has continued. Emphasis has been placed on developing a clear understanding of permanency and providing clarity across the whole service to ensure commitment to the changes required. There has been a specific focus on developing a range of monitoring and quality assurance systems. Findings from audits and regular management monitoring will be available for subsequent SIB meetings. Work has also continued on developing a customer care culture.

<b>Improvements noted in the report</b>	<b>Evidence to support improvements</b>	<b>Were actions taken to the timescale outlined in the plan</b>
Implementation and monitoring of compliance with the permanency policy	Meeting held in September with senior managers from Independent Safeguarding Unit (ISU), Operations and Placement services where processes for implementing the permanency policy and the improvement of timeliness and quality of permanency plans was agreed.	Yes
Development of quality assurance and monitoring systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality assurance and monitoring role of ISU clarified including regular reporting arrangements.</li> <li>• The Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) are taking ownership of tracking children and questioning permanence planning at the 2<sup>nd</sup> LAC review in line with requirements.</li> </ul>	Yes
Developing an Adoption service with the right culture and skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Adoption Team has delivered 3 workshops for social care staff covering life story, later life letter writing and indirect contact.</li> <li>• 3 staff sessions have been held about attachment.</li> <li>• Tutorials on adoption and permanence matters have been commissioned via BAAF and Outcomes UK. Delivery will commence in October 2012.</li> <li>• Basic training attended by 181 social care staff in July covered permanency planning.</li> </ul>	Yes
Developing a customer focused Adoption Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback forms for use with adopters/others attending Adoption Panel developed are in use.</li> <li>• Adoption Panel has begun to more closely scrutinize the timeliness of decisions for children and prospective adopters.</li> </ul>	Yes

## **Permanency Planning**

47. There has been a significant amount of activity across children's services in order to drive forward improvements in the permanency planning process. A meeting was held with both senior and team/resource managers across children's services in early September to agree the process for implementation of the permanency policy and to develop processes for quality assurance and monitoring policy compliance.
48. Progress will be monitored by the Independent Reviewing Officer manager and respective team managers. Reports will be provided for Social Care and Integrated Youth Senior Management Team Performance Meetings which take place each month.
49. A dedicated Home Finder for adoption has been in post since 1.9.12. As previously reported the post was created within existing adoption team resources. The Home Finder is invited to attend all second reviews where adoption may be considered as part of the permanency plan for a child. The Home Finder will also assist case holders through the adoption placement finding process as required. The Home Finder post has responsibility for engaging with teams across the authority and for improving permanence planning practice. The Home Finder will assist case holders with managing complex family finding and identifying placements for more complex children where placement options may be limited due to health, disability or high level challenging or risk taking behaviour may be a factor. The home finder is the contact and liaison for SWAC, voluntary adoption agency and national adoption register family finding.
50. The duty officer for Fostering services now attends all reviews where long term fostering is the permanency plan this role continues to be developed.
51. Both Concurrent Planning and "Fostering for Adoption" processes have been developed. Concurrent carers are being recruited.
52. Further work is taking place on transfer points for cases between teams a number of children in care have been identified to transfer from the safeguarding teams to the Children in Care (CiC) teams. This should ensure a better service for all CiC, including permanence planning.

## **Quality Assurance**

53. Performance information regarding adoption is already collated on a monthly basis. The Safeguarding Improvement Board key data set includes the three DfE scorecard measures around timeliness and an indicator on permanency planning.
54. Information is also presented on how long it takes prospective adopters to be approved. In addition information is monitored by the Adoption Panel and Social Care and IYS performance management meeting on whether children are adopted within 12 months of the "best interest" decision being made and the number of special guardianships that are agreed.
55. The Adoption Panel currently receive data reports quarterly. These reports provide information on children where the recommendation is that they should be placed for adoption. The Adoption Panel chair will now report to the agency decision maker cases where drift is occurring.
56. The following quality assurance and monitoring systems have been developed:

- The quality assurance and monitoring role of the ISU has been clarified. Timetable for audits and reporting of findings has been agreed. The Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) are taking ownership of tracking children and questioning permanence planning at the 2<sup>nd</sup> LAC review.
- Quality assurance processes have been reviewed and revised. Audit formats and processes have been agreed and timescales for completing regular audits have been established.
- The Adoption Panel is now taking a more active role in monitoring timescales for matching children and approving adopters.
- Cases where drift has occurred have now been identified. An audit of all 11 cases was undertaken by the Head of Service for Children in Care and Head of Service for Community Safeguarding on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2012. In all cases the current case holder attended to discuss the reason for drift and present their plan for permanence for each child. Resources and support were discussed. The findings from the audit and case presentations will be presented to the next Social Care and Integrated Youth Management Team meeting. Similar audits will take place each month.

### **Getting the right culture and skills**

57. The Head of Service has attended Adoption Team meetings. Within the team and the service the importance of and need for improvement is constantly reinforced and owned. Throughout the team has been involved in developing and implementing the Improvement Plan. The Director of Children's services is due to visit the team in before the end of the year.
58. The Adoption Team are delivering workshops and consultation on permanence and adoption related issues. These are featured on the training pathway and dates are set for 2012/13.
59. The Adoption Team, including adoption support workers, are providing consultation opportunities, workshops and training for all social care teams on later life letters, adoption support planning, attachment theory, e-safety and life-story work. Dates are set for 2012/13.
60. The Adoption Support co-ordinators and Wiltshire PACT partners are to attend social care team meetings with PACT Wiltshire workers to promote services for birth parents. Dates are set for visits during 2012/13.
61. All workers in the adoption team fully appreciate and understand the need for improvements and the team share the responsibility with colleagues across children's social care services for this.
62. Tutorials on adoption and permanence matters have been commissioned via BAAF and Outcomes UK. Delivery of the training programme will commence in October 2012.

### **Customer focused Adoption Service**

63. Feedback forms for use by adopters and others attending Adoption Panel has been further developed and is in use.
64. The adoption panel chair, agency adviser and agency decision maker meet 6 monthly to scrutinise the feedback from those attending panel meetings and to QA the paperwork being presented to the panel. This directly feeds back into panel and social work practice.

65. Improvements have been made to the initial enquiry process regarding timeliness, criteria for adoption enquiries and information.
66. An Adopter's Reference Group has been established the first meeting took place 26th September 2012.
67. Discussions are underway to improve the website and access to online support for adopters. A consultation/feedback package for adopters is being researched and will be set up.

### **Other developments**

68. Over the next few months the focus across children's social care services will continue to be on addressing the culture, leadership, service delivery design and practice issues which have been identified.
69. The Manager of the IRO service and Service Manager for Family Placement Service were tasked with identifying cases where there appeared to be no realistic permanency plan or where the plan for permanency appeared to drift significantly. 7 families (11 children) were initially identified.
70. Permanency plan audits by Heads of Service will be carried out each month.
71. Strengthened quality assurance, including performance data and practice audit oversight will be in place to closely monitor progress and take additional actions if and when required.
72. A data set is due to be presented by the Head of Service for Children in Care at the monthly Senior Management Team performance meeting.
73. A further scorecard is expected to be published in October 2012. When received, the Indicators will be actively interrogated.
74. For the future there is continued improvement required, the adoption service is rising to this challenge and is committed to it.

**Wiltshire Council**

**Children's Select Committee**

**29 November 2012**

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## **Coalition Changes – Update September to November 2012**

### **Key Stage 4 Exam Reform**

1. The Education Secretary, Michael Gove has outlined plans to reform Key Stage 4 examinations. Key headlines include:
  - Removal of module based learning.
  - Removal of controlled assessment and coursework from core subjects.
  - Ending of two-tier division of exams into foundation and higher tiers.
  - Ending competition between exam boards.
  - Exam Boards to be invited to offer wholly new qualifications in the core subject areas of English, mathematics, the sciences, history, geography and languages. Only one exam board per subject area.
  - New qualifications in core academic subjects to be called English Baccalaureate Certificates (EBacc).
  - Success in English, mathematics, the sciences, a humanities subject and a language will mean that a student has achieved the full English Baccalaureate.
  - Everyone who now sits a GCSE will be expected to sit this new qualification.
  - Special and enhanced provision for students who will find it difficult to sit these new exams will be developed. For these students schools will be expected to produce a detailed record of their achievement in each curriculum area which will help them make progress. It is expected that some of these students will secure the EBacc Certificates at the age of 17 or 18.
2. The Department has stated that it will consult widely on these reforms and it proposes that the first teaching of the new certificates in English, mathematics and the sciences will commence in September 2015 with other subjects following.
3. As part of these reforms the Department will consider how to hold schools accountable. This will include consulting on replacements for existing league tables and exploring better ways of recognising schools which add value and help the most disadvantaged. It will also involve seeking to ensure the best vocational and academic qualifications are recognised in a fair and rigorous way.

## Focus on Computer Science Teaching in Schools

4. The Government has announced a number of measures to support schools to focus more strongly on Computer Science:
- A scholarship programme (£20k per scholarship) supported by industry has been developed for top graduates to train as Computer Science Teachers.
  - A new Computer Science Teacher Training Course will replace Information and Communications Technology (ICT). Funding for ICT teacher training courses will soon come to an end and Computer Science Courses will be available from September 2013.
  - Current teachers will be up skilled as experts in Computer Science.

## Disadvantaged school children get cash boost

5. The Pupil Premium will rise to £900 per pupil next year. Schools receive additional funding through the premium for every child registered as eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) at any point in the past six years and children in care who have been looked after for six months. The funding aims to help schools provide the extra support children and young people need to reach their full potential.

## Academies Update

			Date opened
	Sponsored academies:		
1	The Wellington Academy	Salisbury	September 2009
2	Sarum Academy	Salisbury	September 2010
	Non-sponsored academies:		
3	Hardenhuish	Chippenham	September 2010
4	Lavington	Lavington	January 2011
5	South Wilts	Salisbury	January 2011
6	Bishop Wordsworth's	Salisbury	March 2011
7	Corsham Primary School	Corsham	April 2011
8	The Corsham School	Corsham	April 2011
9	Sheldon School	Chippenham	April 2011
10	Pewsey Vale	Pewsey	July 2011
11	Wootton Bassett	Wootton Bassett	July 2011
12	Kingdown School	Warminster	August 2011
13	St Laurence	Bradford on Avon	August 2011
14	Malmesbury	Malmesbury	August 2011

1 5	The Holy Trinity School	Great Cheverell	September 2011
1 6	Saint Edmund's Catholic Academy	Calne	September 2011
1 7	St Joseph's Catholic Primary School	Devizes	September 2011
1 8	St Augustine's Catholic School	Trowbridge	September 2011
1 9	Springfields School	Calne	September 2011
2 0	The John Bentley	Calne	November 2011
2 1	St Edmunds CE Girls School	Salisbury	February 2012
2 2	The John of Gaunt School	Trowbridge	April 2012
2 3	The Mead Academy Trust	Trowbridge	May 2012
2 4	Holy Trinity School,	Calne	May 2012
2 5	By Brook Valley Primary	Nr Chippenham	May 2012
2 6	Woodford Valley	Nr Salisbury	June 2012
2 7	Easton Royal Primary	Nr Pewsey	September 2012
2 8	Devizes School	Devizes	September 2012
2 9	St John's School Marlborough	Marlborough	September 2012
3 0	The Manor Primary	Melksham	September 2012

### Measures to improve adoption and fostering

6. A number of changes are being proposed to make the adoption and fostering process timelier, more efficient and user friendly. Following consultation some of these changes are set to take effect next year. The Government is currently seeking views on measures that aim to allow foster carers to make everyday decisions about the children they look after and simplify the approval process to encourage more people to come forward to foster.
7. Two draft clauses were laid before Parliament on 7<sup>th</sup> November for pre-legislative scrutiny by the Select Committee on Adoption legislation. The draft clauses:
  - I. Place a duty on Local Authorities to give preference to a '*Fostering for Adoption*' placement. This will enable adopters to be approved rapidly as temporary foster carers. It is expected that this will result in more children being placed with their

potential permanent carers on a fostering basis while the council seeks a placement order from the courts.

- II. Remove the express duty on adoption agencies to give due consideration to religious persuasion, racial origin and cultural and linguistic background when matching children with prospective adopters. The Government take the view that this change will reinforce the existing emphasis on the welfare of the child and the impact of any delay.
8. Comments on the draft clauses can be made to the Departments adoption team at [ruth.wilson@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:ruth.wilson@education.gsi.gov.uk) by 30<sup>th</sup> November 2012. The Select Committee on Adoption legislation will present its views on the clauses and existing legislation in due course. It is expected that these reforms will become law in two years time.
  9. Other measures being introduced to encourage councils to do more to enable children in care to be placed more quickly include:
    - Bringing in a new two-stage approval process for adopters, as well as a new fast track procedure for approved foster carers and previous adopters who wish to adopt.
    - Requiring councils to refer looked after children for whom adoption is the plan to the Adoption Register within three months so that they are matched with adopters as soon as possible.
    - Requiring all adoption agencies to refer prospective adopters to the Adoption Register no later than three months after approval.
    - Making it a legal requirement that councils ensure that the child details on the Adoption Register are kept up to date.
    - Removing the requirement to interview personal referees when a person has been an approved foster carer in the last year and a reference is available from their last fostering service.
  10. The Government is also seeking views on reducing the size of adoption and fostering panels and is making available £8m funding this year to help adoption services. Funding will be used to develop the necessary skills, tools, and working arrangements to deliver the programme of adoption reform, of which the above measures form a significant part.
  11. Recently published statistics on adoption show a rise in the number of adoptions and adoption placement orders. The Government has welcomed this news but still recognises the need to improve the time it takes for those who want to adopt and foster to be approved. An additional measure to is being explored which encourages councils to make use of adopters in other parts of the country.
  12. The Government has called for more people to adopt children following the publication of figures which show that nationally there are more than 4200 children ready for adoption but have not yet been able to move in with a family. This figure has grown by 650 in each of the last two years and data shows that it still takes on average 2.5 years from a child going into care to being adopted. The Government has developed

scorecards that show the difference in delay for children in different councils.

13. First4adoption, a consortium of Coram, Coram Children's Legal Centre and Adoption UK has won the contract for the National Gateway for Adoption. From next year this will provide a first point of contact for anyone who is interested in adoption through a telephone helpline and a website.

### **Rochdale Borough Safeguarding Children's Board Review of Multi-Agency Responses to the Sexual Exploitation of Children**

14. Rochdale Borough Safeguarding Children's Board has announced that it intends to carry out a future, in depth Serious Case Review to learn lessons and strengthen local child protection arrangements. This is part of an overhaul of how abused young people are protected.
15. The government has put in place a national action plan with the courts, police and social services to prosecute and jail perpetrators of sexual abuse and exploitation, protect young people at risk and help victims to recover. The government is also taking urgent action to strengthen protection for children living in care homes and those who are most vulnerable to abuse. The DfE will report back on the latter by the end of the year.
16. In responding to the Rochdale Review the Children's Minister Edward Timpson has stated the need for agencies to ensure that allegations are taken seriously and that young people who make such allegations are treated as victims.

### **New Grants programme for Voluntary and Community Sector launched**

17. The Department for Education has published a National Prospectus which launches a new Grants Programme for 2013-15. The Prospectus outlines a number of additional key services and activities that the Department will be investing in for the benefit of children, young people and families over the course of the next two years. The package will be worth up to an estimated £60m made up of £30m of grant funding and £30m of contracts, in both 2013-14 and 2014-15.
18. It is anticipated that the National Prospectus Grants Programme will lead to new, innovative proposals and will inform national policy. The programme will focus on delivering the following five priorities:
  - I. Promote excellence in early education and childcare, so enabling all children to achieve success in their early years and later education.
  - II. Develop and reform safeguarding services that protect and support children at risk of harm.
  - III. Develop and reform the care system and speed up the process of adoption.

- IV. Develop and reform services that support children with SEN, disabilities and other health needs.
  - V. Focus and develop local services to support improved outcomes for young people, particularly the most disadvantaged and vulnerable.
19. Applications are being invited from voluntary and community sector organisations, social enterprises and other organisations bidding on a “*not for profit*” basis. Funding will be available for two years from 1 April 2013. The application process is now open and will close on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2012.
20. In addition to the Grants Programme brief details of a number of contracted services which the Department expects to procure in the coming months are included in the [Prospectus](#). Announcements about contracts for a range of new relationship support services will be made later this year. Funding will also continue for a number of online and telephone family support services.

**Carolyn Godfrey, Corporate Director**

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Report author: James Fortune, Lead Commissioner, Children’s Services.

Largely taken from the DFE website content 13 September – 14 November 2012

19/11/12

**Wiltshire Council**

**Children's Select Committee  
29 November 2012**

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## **Task Group update**

### **1. Safeguarding Children & Young People Task Group**

Membership: Cllr Andrew Davis  
Cllr Jon Hubbard (Chairman)  
Rev Alice Kemp  
Cllr Bill Moss  
Cllr Carole Soden  
Cllr Bridget Wayman

#### Meeting Wiltshire Council staff

Since the Committee's last meeting, the Task Group has met with:

- The Head of Referral and Assessment – Children's Social Care
- Assistant Team Managers (ATMs) from the Referral & Assessment team
- Child Protection Chairs (CPCs) and Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) from the social care team
- Head of Service – Integrated Youth

#### Attending Multi Agency Forums

Several members attended Chippenham MAF in order to learn about MAFs' operation and discuss attendees' views of safeguarding in Wiltshire. The Task Group now plans to attend MAFs in other community areas.

#### Visits to other local authorities

On 12 October the Task Group visited Swindon Borough Council, which received an Ofsted grading of 'Good' at their last safeguarding inspection. The Task Group met officers from social care and Swindon's Lead Member for Children's Services. Learning points from the visit included:

- Swindon's social care teams have low staff turnover, stable management and a low number of temporary staff.

- Staff across the different agencies value having established and stable networks of contacts.
- The social workers consider themselves to be effective at managing the anxiety of other agencies – they consider this a key part of the job. A ‘Lead for School Safeguarding’ post has helped to reduce the number of unnecessary referrals.
- Swindon’s children’s services scrutiny committee receives a safeguarding performance report at every meeting.

A visit to Dorset County Council is now being arranged.

### Future work

Following its formation, the Task Group resolved to focus on four key themes:

1. Communications
2. Workloads
3. Locality working
4. Future scrutiny of safeguarding

The Task Group plans to cover areas 1 to 3 up until Christmas 2012. Members believe this will give them a good enough understanding of safeguarding issues to effectively undertake area no. 4. The Task Group will meet on 29 November to review progress and agree what further work is required.

The Task Group then plans to bring its final report to the Children’s Select Committee on 28 March 2013.

## **2. Special School and Post-16 SEN Task Group**

Membership:

- Cllr Carole Soden
- Rev Alice Kemp
- Cllr Graham Payne (Chairman)
- Cllr Anthony Trotman

The Committee received the Executive response to the Task Group’s report in September and following this agreed that the Task Group would continue its work. The Task Group is provisionally scheduled to meet again on 6 December to receive various updates and discuss future work. The Task Group work programme currently includes:

- Health care provision in special schools

- Usage of and waiting times for Canon's House and Hillcote respite facilities
- Post-16 provision by special schools and Wiltshire College
- Identification of Speech and Language difficulties in primary school aged children

### **3. Major Contracts Task Group**

Membership: Cllr Jon Hubbard  
Cllr Jacqui Lay  
Cllr Bill Moss (Chairman)  
Cllr Carole Soden

This Task Group's will meet on 17 December to conduct their annual review of the Council's contract with the White Horse Education Partnership (WHEP) for the provision of fully serviced secondary school accommodation at Chippenham (Abbeyfield), Malmesbury and Royal Wootton Bassett.

The other contract on the Task Group's work programme is the cluster contracts with four providers of the county's children's centres. A meeting to review these will be arranged for February 2013.

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**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY  
FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME**

Subject	Select Committee	Date when proposed	Approved by Management Committee	Scrutiny Role (scrutiny/overview)	When to be considered	Review Date	Background	Rationale for inclusion	Cabinet Member/Portfolio Holder/key officer	Scrutiny/ DSO
Children's attainment	Children's	Legacy 12/09/12	17/07/12	Scrutiny	Jan-13		The Committee receives annual pupil performance reports showing children's attainment in Wiltshire (early years to Key Stage 5).  The Committee is also monitoring the devolvement of responsibility for excluded children from the LA to schools (September).	Listed as a priority within the Business Plan 2011-15.  The Committee's concerns around pupil performance have tended to focus on the attainment gaps between all pupils and those with SEN and those on FSM.	Cllr Lionel Grundy  Carolyn Godfrey  Stephanie Denovan	HP/RB
Family Information Service - Update	Children's	31/07/12	Mar-12	Scrutiny	Mar-13		A review of the Council's Family Information Service in early 2012 concluded that there was significant duplication around provision of information for parents and carers. A new service model was proposed.  A rapid scrutiny exercise undertaken in May 2012 identified concerns regarding the effect of the proposals on delivery. Following receipt of the executive response, the Committee elected to receive the outcomes of the review of the Family Information Service scheduled to be undertaken between January and April 2013.	The Family Information Service (FIS) provides information for parents and carers, child care information and information/advocacy for families with a disabled child or a significant special educational need.  Vulnerable Children is listed as a priority within the Business Plan 2011-15	Cllr Lionel Grundy  Julia Cramp	HP/RB
Services for disabled children	Children's	12/07/12	17/07/12	Scrutiny and policy development	Mar-13		The Chairman will request a report on the review of services for disabled children to be received in September.	Listed as a priority within the Business Plan 2011-15.  Joining educational and healthcare provision for disabled children is a significant project.	Cllr Lionel Grundy  Carolyn Godfrey  Sue Redmond	HP/RB
Special Schools and Post-16 SEN	Children's	Legacy 12/09/12	17/07/12	Task Group	Task Group report endorsed 26 July 2012.  Executive response expected 27 September 2012.	Further work in progress	The Special Schools & Post-16 SEN Task Group's recommendations focus on: - Healthcare in special schools - Special school buildings - Post-16 education for those with SEN - Readiness for future demand  The Committee has also been monitoring the review of passenger assistants for those with SEN.	Vulnerable Children is listed as a priority within the Business Plan 2011-15.  Significant attainment gaps between 'all children' and those with SEN.	Cllr Lionel Grundy  Stephanie Denovan	HP
Further Education in the Salisbury Area	Children's	Legacy 12/09/12	17/07/12	Task Group	Task Group report endorsed May 2012.  Exec response received July 2012.	May-13	Task Group formed in September 2010 following concerns about the number of young people leaving the county for further education in Hampshire.	Established following reports of significant numbers of students from the Salisbury area travelling large distances, often outside of Wiltshire, to access further education, with potential impacts on attainment, quality of life, the environment, numbers of NEETs and the economic vitality of the local area	Cllr Lionel Grundy  Stephanie Denovan	
Safeguarding children	Children's	Legacy 12/09/12	17/07/12	Task Group	Standing	Interim report to Committee November 2012	The Safeguarding Children & Young People Task Group replaced the Placements for LAC Task Group and its remit includes both safeguarding and all matters relating to Looked After Children (LAC).	In March 2012, Wiltshire received an Ofsted grading of 'Inadequate' for its safeguarding services.  The Task Group is working closely with the high-level Safeguarding Improvement Board to ensure improvements are made.	Cllr Laura Mayes  Carolyn Godfrey  Fiona Fitzpatrick	HP

Subject	Select Committee	Date when proposed	Approved by Management Committee	Scrutiny Role (scrutiny/overview)	When to be considered	Review Date	Background	Rationale for inclusion	Cabinet Member/Portfolio Holder/key officer	Scrutiny/ DSO
Major Contracts	Children's	12/07/12	17/07/12	Task Group	Dec-12		<p>The Major Contracts Task Group reviews the performance of Wiltshire's children's centres annually.</p> <p>It also reviewed contracts with Quarriers (contract now terminated) and the PFI schools.</p>	Children centres focus on early intervention with Vulnerable children and families, which is a priority within the Business Plan.	<p>Cllr Lionel Grundy</p> <p>Julia Cramp</p>	HP/RB
