

SECOND MAJOR REVIEW – ADOPTION & PERMANENCE OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

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REASON FOR ITEM

To consider the draft scoping report on this Committee's second major review into Adoption & Permanence of Looked after children which had been agreed as a review topic at the last meeting of this Committee.

Officers will provide Members with a brief presentation on the topic of Adoption within Hillingdon which will provide an overview of Adoption locally and nationally.

OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO THE COMMITTEE

1. To give consideration to the detail contained in the draft scoping report and to make comments and suggestions on the detail contained within
2. To request clarification and further information from officers
3. To agree the scoping report and the witnesses that will be required for the Committee to conduct its review

INFORMATION

1. At the 23 November 2011 meeting of this Committee, approval was given to the Committee undertaking its second major review of the Municipal Year on Adoption and how Hillingdon performed in relation to the speed of providing placements
2. Focus on adoption has become a national issue with Central Government recently producing league tables of performance aimed at driving up the number of children adopted and the delays they face in waiting for families. There was a huge variation in how well local authorities are looking after their children in care and the Government has published performance tables, which ranks every local authority in England on how quickly they place children for adoption.
3. The Government wants to overhaul the care and adoption system to improve chances for vulnerable children as the present average length of time for an adoption to take place is two years and seven months. Numbers of adoptions have been falling in recent years- down some 8% since 2007 – and educational outcomes for children in care remain poor.

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4. This review aims to look at that in the wider context of securing permanence for children. In terms of pressures on Council resources, the cost of looking after children has also been a matter of concern locally and nationally. Securing permanence is a positive “exit from care” for children that co-incidentally relieves cost pressures both from the direct costs of looking after children and the indirect costs of providing a “looked after children’s service” for them. This review is aimed at looking at the costs of securing permanence against the costs of a rising population of looked after children.

PAPERS WITH THE REPORT

Draft Scoping Report (Appendix A).