

Commissioning for Peninsula Fostering Services, with Independent Fostering Agencies Tender Approval and Arrangements for Award of the Contract.

Report of the Head of Children's Health and Wellbeing

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Cabinet (and confirmation under the provisions of the Council's Constitution) before taking effect.

Recommendations: It is recommended that Cabinet: -

- a) Provide approval for a tendering process to be undertaken during summer 2022 with independent fostering agencies (IFAs), for the delivery of fostering services from October 2022, as per the recommendations and design set out in this report.
- b) Delegate authority to the Chief Officer for Children's Services to agree non-material changes within the overarching strategy detailed in section 4 (proposal).
- c) Delegate authority to the Chief Officer for Children's Services, in consultation with the Lead Cabinet Member for Children's Services & Schools, to approve contract award recommendations for Peninsula Fostering Services with IFAs.

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report seeks approval from Cabinet on the proposed commissioning and procurement arrangements of independent fostering services (IFAs) detailed in this report. These services will support children in care and children, and young people with SEND, who are eligible for a short break service¹. These services will be delivered by IFAs and typically used when foster families are not available through our inhouse fostering service.
- 1.2 This proposal has been developed by the Peninsula Commissioning & Procurement Partnership which aims to jointly and collaboratively commission services to benefit children and young people living across the Peninsula authorities.
- 1.3 The availability and provision of fostering services and short break services supports the Council in meeting our statutory duties, and in delivering our strategic priorities in outlined in [Devon's, A Place Called Home is the Devon Sufficiency Strategy](#); our duties as corporate parents for children and young people in our care as outlined in [Devon's](#)

¹ Short Breaks covers a range of services which support disabled children, young people, children, and young people with SEND and children and young people with additional needs and their families. They can include the provision of day, evening, overnight and weekend stays and/ or activities for the child or young person. They can take place in the child's own home, the home of an approved carer, or in a residential or community setting. The short breaks service being included here are family based short breaks, where foster carers provide overnight stays in their homes for identified children, young people, and their families.

[Corporate Parenting Strategy](#), and our vision and priorities for families and children and young people with SEND as outlined in [Devon's SEND strategy](#).

- 1.4 The current independent fostering services contract provides children and young people in our care with the opportunity to live in a family environment providing a safe, stable, and caring home allowing them to thrive, achieve the best possible outcomes and to be prepared for their next steps into adult life.
- 1.5 Family based Short Breaks for children and young people with SEND enables parents to receive a break from their caring responsibilities, whilst giving children and young people an opportunity to have positive experiences outside their families. The proposed new framework agreement will ensure this continues and increased to provide more opportunities for children and young people, and their families.
- 1.6 In developing the proposed commissioning and procurement arrangements for fostering services, Peninsula Partners have considered several options and approaches to the market. The proposal is to tender for a multi provider framework agreement for a minimum period of 5 years, with the option to extend for up to a further 2 years. This option is being recommended as it will maintain, and increase sufficiency, increase quality, provide flexibility, and ensure value for money, alongside ultimately supporting children and young people to thrive in secure and stable foster families.
- 1.7 Under the proposed framework agreement there will be no guaranteed volumes of business as the value of spend will be driven by the demand for placements. However, it is worth noting that Devon County Council's (DCC's) total gross spend on independent fostering placements, including family based short breaks, for the last full financial year (2020/2021) was £8,941,000.
- 1.8 If approved, commissioning and procurement arrangements will begin on 1st October 2022.

2. Background

- 2.1 DCC has been part of a peninsula partnership with Plymouth City Council, Torbay Council and Somerset County Council since 2006. DCC acts as the lead authority to support a joint and collaborative commissioning, procurement and contracting approach across children's services. This includes the existing 'Southwest Peninsula' commissioning and procurement arrangement for foster placements with IFAs to support children in care.
- 2.2 Under the current arrangements IFAs deliver services to support children in care from birth to 18 years to live with foster carers in a family-based environment. Through 'Staying Put' arrangements there is also the option for young people to continue to live with their foster carers up to the age of 21 years, or up to the age of 25 years if the young person is in full time education.
- 2.3 The current IFA framework started on 1st April 2018 and is a multi-provider framework agreement with no promised volumes and call off through open expressions of interest for individual placements. Following a 6-month extension agreed by the Lead Cabinet

Member for Children's Services & Schools in February 2022, the current framework is due to end on 30th September 2022.

- 2.4 The framework arrangement currently includes fostering agencies operating in Devon, Plymouth, Cornwall, Torbay, and Somerset, although some of the agencies offer placements nationally.
- 2.5 IFAs in the existing framework arrangements provide a list of their weekly fees, with an additional "menu" of enhanced support, such as therapy and family support worker time. This enables transparency of the services being commissioned, and an opportunity to scale support up and down dependent on a child's individual needs.
- 2.6 Having these commissioning arrangements in place with the IFA market has been beneficial for Peninsula authorities in supporting sufficiency and availability of foster carers and family homes.
 - 2.6.1 For example, in February 2022:
 - There were 819 children in the care of which 157 (19%) were living in family homes with foster carers supported by IFAs through the current Framework Agreement. In comparison, there were only 13 fostering placements made through spot contracts outside of the current IFA framework arrangements. Spot contracts typically have higher weekly costs than those negotiated through the framework, and placements are not subject to the same quarterly quality assurance monitoring undertaken with framework providers. The quality assurance of these placement would be an additional responsibility for social work teams.
 - In addition, IFAs on the framework were also supporting 4 parent and child placements and 12 'Staying Put' placements. Section 4.2 provides a description of these services in more detail.
 - 2.6.2 At a Peninsula level, as of December 2021, there were approximately 540 children and young people from the 4 Peninsula local authorities living in family homes with foster carers being supported by IFAs through the current framework arrangements.

3. Overview of Options Appraisal and Analysis

- 3.1 An options appraisal and analysis were undertaken by the Peninsula Commissioning and Procurement Partnership as part of re-commissioning activity.
- 3.2 Options which were considered as part of the options appraisal included:
 - 3.2.1 Option 1: Do nothing and move to spot contracting arrangements. This option would include leaving the existing Peninsula Fostering Framework Agreement to expire on the 30th of September 2022. There would be no formalised agreements in place. Any fostering placements with IFAs under this option are likely to be through spot contracting arrangements and more than likely at higher weekly cost.

This was not a recommended option.

3.2.2 Option 2: Block Contracting Arrangements. This option would include purchasing a bulk volume of fostering services outright to be used by Peninsula Authorities. Usually, these arrangements work best with one provider. It is unlikely a single provider or block would be able to cater for the needs of all Peninsula authorities and would not support sufficiency for Peninsula authorities. Moreover, there is a high risk in the event of business failure, quality and safeguarding concerns when taking a single provider approach. Full utilisation of the volumes purchased could also be a drawback for particular groups of services. If all volume is not utilised local authorities would be committed to paying for these services even in the event they are not being used.

Therefore, this was not a recommended option.

3.2.3 Option 3: Closed Multi-Provider Framework Agreement. This option would only provide IFAs one opportunity to join the Peninsula Fostering Framework Agreement. This would restrict our ability to grow sufficiency across fostering services with more IFAs through the life of the Framework Agreement. In addition, the option to co-design new emergency fostering services would not be permitted through this option.

Therefore, this was not a recommended option.

3.2.4 Option 4: Dynamic Purchasing System. This option would enable IFAs to join the Peninsula Framework to deliver fostering services at any time, as the Framework remains open. However, an evaluation team from across all Peninsula authorities would need to be permanently available to complete quality, and pricing evaluation and due diligence checks, required as part of the procurement and commissioning process.

This is therefore not a recommended option.

3.2.5 Option 5: Multi-Provider Framework Agreement with entry points at set intervals. This is the recommended option as it will realise maximum benefits for DCC and the young people in its care, including ensuring sufficiency of services. It will also facilitate the entrance of new providers increasing sufficiency, provide flexibility in the way that we work with providers allowing more partnership style working and longer-term arrangements. A multi-provider Framework Agreement will also maintain competition in the market which will drive forward value for money and quality of services. In summary this option will maintain and increase sufficiency, increase quality, provide flexibility, and ensure value for money all of which ultimately provides better outcomes for our young people. Section 4 outlines the design and summarises the rationale for this being proposed as the preferred option.

4. Summary of Proposed Contract Scope, Design, Benefits and Rationale.

4.1 Subject to approval, it is anticipated that the new arrangements would replace the existing approach to providing fostering services through IFAs when it expires on 30 September 2022.

Proposed Commissioning and Procurement Arrangements

Scope of Services

- 4.2 The Peninsula Commissioning and Procurement Partnership are proposing a new arrangement focusing on the provision of 6 types of fostering services for children and young people in need or in the care of our local authorities. These are:
- **Standard Fostering Services:** These will enable children with a broad range of needs, including emotional and behavioural issues, physical and learning disabilities and sensory impairment to live in a family home with foster carers. Services will be needed for a variety of reasons and durations, including short term, long term, shared care, to support rehabilitation to family or progression to independent living.
 - **Enhanced Fostering Services:** These are specifically designed for those children with significantly complex needs, above those which would usually be considered and met through standard fostering. These children require a bespoke foster placement with an individual package of support and care. This could be increased or reduced as required as the child's needs change. There will also be an option to develop bespoke packages to enable children to move from a residential children's home to live with foster carers when they are able to do so.
 - **Emergency Fostering Services:** These services will support any child in care in crisis and requiring a placement at short notice. This would include children and young people of all ages and with a range of needs. The offer would be for a minimum of 24 hours and up to a maximum of 1-2 weeks. This is a new service area which we are planning to co-design with interested IFA's during the first 12 months of the contract. However, to ensure the service option is available at the point of the new contracting arrangement 'going live' a draft specification and desired outcomes will be included to the tender.
 - **Staying Put.** This service area will provide opportunities for young people to continue to live with their foster carers up to the age of 25 years and to continue to grow and transition to adulthood.
 - **Family Based Short Breaks services.** These services are designed to support children and young people with SEND. Eligibility for these services will be determined by each local authority. Children between 0-18 years will be able to access a flexible package of support which will include overnight breaks or part day and night packages to suit the child, and their parents or carers. The specification will be developed to allow for these services to be extended to young people with SEND aged 18-25 years during the life of the contract term.
 - **Parent and child services.** These will provide parent and child placements typically to complete an assessment to inform social workers of a parent's ability to care safely for their child or children. These take place either in a family home supported by registered foster carers, or in the community, monitored by outreach support delivered by professionals.

Proposed Contract Design

- 4.3 The Peninsula Partnership are recommending that a procurement tender process is carried out to form a multi-provider Framework Agreement. The initial term will be a minimum of 5 years with options available to extend up to a further 2 years. The Framework Agreement will include multiple entry points at set intervals allowing new entrants and will also include a mechanism for inflationary fee increases.
- 4.4 To support the delivery of our sufficiency obligations there will be no restriction on geography. IFAs that are operating locally and nationally will be invited to bid for the opportunity to deliver some, or all of the fostering services, outlined above at 4.3. However, priority will be given to providers who can ensure Devon young people are placed within or close to Devon.
- 4.5 As the new arrangements will be pulling together multiple services, some of which are new, specific terms and conditions will be drafted where applicable to support individual service specifications. A focus on supporting placement stability and permanence for our children will be included in all specifications.
- 4.6 To be awarded a place on the framework, IFAs will go through a tender process which will include a selection questionnaire, this tests capability and capacity including financial structure and Ofsted registration. Safeguarding and safer recruitment processes will also be tested at this stage. There will be a quality test which will include Ofsted inspection gradings and service specific quality standards. Costings will also be reviewed as part of this process. The award criteria will be formed to achieve the optimum combination of quality, cost, and sustainability. Once this is successfully completed providers will be awarded a place on the Framework Agreement for the specific fostering service they have applied to deliver.
- 4.7 The majority of the IFA providers on the current Framework Agreement are rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding' so the aim will be to maintain this level of quality through the new Framework Agreement.
- 4.8 There will be a number of methods of forming contracts (call offs) under the new Framework Agreement. These will include forming block contracts for a set volume, specialist need or geographical area, forming a partnership to develop a certain element of service or programme, single placement, or multiple placements at once.

Rationale and Benefits Analysis for Proposed Commissioning and Procurement Arrangements

- 4.9 Foster families may be needed for short term, long term, shared care, or to support rehabilitation to family or progression to independent living. Therefore, working with the IFA market to maximise the availability of foster carers and family homes for children in our care is key to achieving this priority within the [Devon Sufficiency Strategy – A Place Called Home](#). It recognises all children and young people should be given the opportunity to live in local, safe, and secure family home where they are parented well, treated with kindness, respect and supported to thrive.

- 4.10 The proposed framework agreement structure will achieve better outcomes for children and young people through engaging the IFA market, so we are working closely with them, being flexible and increasing the reach of the market. The proposal will achieve this by:
- 4.10.1 Having multiple providers on the framework including small, large, specialist, non-specialist, local and national agencies will increase choice of foster home and service ensuring the best match for an individual child or young person. This approach will maintain competition which helps to ensure value for money and keep quality levels high. This will also help in making sure we have specialist providers supporting all areas of need.
 - 4.10.2 Entry points at set stages during the life of the Framework Agreement will support the above point in allowing new entrants to join subject to evaluation.
 - 4.10.3 All providers bidding to join the framework at any point will be tested for capacity, capability, quality, and costs. This will maintain value for money and ensure the quality of providers and placements.
 - 4.10.4 A longer initial term for the framework has been proposed, as it will provide more scope to develop services within the Framework Agreement and promote partnership working with framework providers. This responds to feedback from the IFA market and will help to improve, develop, and focus development of service areas to best meet different needs of children and young people.
 - 4.10.5 Providing flexibility in how we engage through the Framework Agreement by developing several different call off methods will allow for future needs and developments to be addressed through the existing framework without the need for separate commissioned / procured services. This will improve flexibility, partnership working, increase provision through the framework and encourage new entrants.
 - 4.10.6 The new Framework Agreement will include a formal process for agreeing and implementing inflationary uplifts on an annual basis. This will be in line with the methods used to project DCC budgets and market influences (for example CPI). This will allow more efficient management of the market and costs by providing greater transparency of costs for both commissioning partners and providers.
 - 4.10.7 Recruitment of foster carers is national challenge. The inclusion of Family Based Short Breaks adds a known and proven route for encouraging carers into the full-time foster care service. It is anticipated this will help our providers increase their capacity, which in turn, increases our sufficiency.
- 4.11 Through the mechanisms above the framework will provide greater sufficiency, quality, choice, and flexibility of service, thus ensuring children and young people get the right service at the right time, whilst providing commissioners with the levers to support further development across the IFA market.

5. Consultations, Engagement and Representations

- 5.1 Engagement activities including virtual workshops, surveys and individual meetings have been undertaken to inform the commissioning approach summarised in section 4 and the service specifications that will form the tender pack.
- 5.2. Stakeholders including children and young people in care and care leavers; the IFA provider market; other local authorities; and internal teams and practitioners across children’s services have been involved in the process.
- 5.3 Summarised below are examples of themes, ideas and feedback that have emerged through the engagement events. These have been used to shape and inform the commissioning and procurement approach being proposed.

Engagement Event and Date	Examples of feedback received from children and young people.	How is this reflected in the new arrangement
<p>Children in Care and Care Leaver Forum 2022.</p> <p>*Monthly participation group supported by DCC participation Team.</p>	<p><i>“Getting the right place, matching me with someone who I connect to enable me to have a close bond and feel welcome”.</i></p> <p><i>“Make sure I will get on with them and they understand how you are. Meet them before you move in with them ... what are the foster carers like? What is the house like?”</i></p>	<p>Increasing the number of providers, carers, and flexible approaches to call off the Framework are intended to provide the widest choice of placements possible.</p>
<p>Build Back Better, October 2020.</p> <p>*Event supported by Devon Care Leavers.</p>	<p>“Better education for foster carers and personal advisors.... Should be better educated on gender identify and, also mental health”.</p> <p>“For those of us who have stayed in the same home for a long time, life is much better, and we feel more able to spread our wings....”</p> <p>“Staying Put should be available post 21 if we need it....”</p> <p>“We need to be taught about finances, credit cards, debt, insurance and how to self-sufficient.”</p> <p>“The notes you keep about us should celebrate our achievements and skills and not keep pointing out the times we don’t manage so well. We have to keep these records for the rest of our lives”.</p>	<p>The service specifications will reflect the expectations IFA’s and their foster carers including their skills, training, and knowledge; as well as the support we would expect to be provided in caring for and supporting young people with developing independent living skills and preparing for adulthood. Regular contract monitoring following award will ensure service delivery meets the standards within the specifications.</p>

Engagement Event and Date	Examples of feedback received from children and young people.	How is this reflected in the new arrangement
	<p>“Some of us would like more fostering and participation activities where we can meet new people and also meet supportive people from the community....”</p> <p>“When we speak out about things that bother us, we want to see things change and we want to be informed about the changes....”</p>	
<p>Other Stakeholder Events including market engagement</p>	<p>Developing a better understanding of therapeutic offers.</p> <p>Providers are keen to know more about how data is being used by the local authority.</p> <p>Risks, behaviours, and best practice relating to notice periods for placements in foster homes needs further development.</p> <p>Earlier and better planning and funding for ‘Staying Put’ arrangements.</p>	<p>Creating a closer working relationship and generating value for both commissioners and providers will support this.</p>

5.4 The Peninsula Commissioning and Procurement Partnership remain committed to ensuring appropriate engagement with all stakeholders throughout the re-commissioning and procurement process. Therefore, a programme of engagement will remain up until contract award has been made.

6. Financial Considerations

6.1 The Council’s total gross spend on independent fostering placements, including family based short breaks, for the last full financial year (2020/2021) was £8,941,000. The projected gross budgeted expenditure for the financial year 2022/2023 is £9,312,000. Budgeted expenditure allows for a 2.5% inflationary increase for placements being made for children and young people.

6.2 At the outset of the current framework, providers were able to stipulate what their price would be for each of the 4 contract years. This produced an average annual increase of 1.2% Between January and December 2021, DCC made arrangements for 209 children and young people in our care to live in family homes with foster carers through the current framework. The average costs for these arrangements were as follows:

	Age of children and young people (years)			
	0-4	5-10	11-15	16-18
2021 average weekly cost (Jan -Dec 2021)	£859.49	£937.12	£967.53	£959.77

- 6.3 Should Cabinet approve the recommendation being made within this paper to take the contracting opportunity described and summarised in Section 3 out to tender with IFAs:
- 6.3.1 There is a risk that there will be an increase in prices for the delivery of independent fostering services from September 2022. It is recognised that this risk would apply to the recommended option as well as any other options described in Section 3. Throughout engagement IFAs have referenced the following as emerging financial pressures that will impact the market:
- The rapidly increasing rate of inflation through 2022 to date and the pressures foster carers face with increased utility fees and to general costs of living.
 - The introduction of the Health and Social Care Tax for all employees from April 2022.
 - Wage increases for any staff on National Living Wage from April 2022.
- 6.3.2 The ability to provide uplifts for foster carers and staff in these contexts could also have an impact on the recruitment and retention of and thus availability of high-quality foster carers to support children and young people in our care .
- 6.3.3 To support both the Council and IFAs, within the commissioning and procurement approach proposed, IFAs will be required to complete a costing breakdown for fostering services and any additional support / therapeutic services going forward. This will provide a menu of costs which will be reviewed as part of any procurement process and will enable commissioners to manage costs going forward.
- 6.3.4 In addition, a pricing protocol for the Framework Agreement will be included. This will include consideration of any planned increases to the National Living Wage, the rate of the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) and any unforeseen and significant cost increases, for example regulatory fees. This will allow for consultation with the market and our finance teams to align with the service budgets. The increase will then be applied on an annual basis.
- 6.3.5 Overall, the above mechanisms will aim to achieve high quality fostering services which reflect value for money and are sustainable and viable for both parties, as far as possible. The service arrangement and agreement for each individual child will remain the responsibility of each individual Peninsula authority accessing fostering services to be included in the commissioning and procurement arrangements described in Section 4.
- 6.4 Benchmarking exercises with a range of other local authorities has not revealed any consistent approach to pricing as part of their commissioning and procurement arrangements for fostering services.

7. Legal Considerations

- 7.1 The lawful implications of the proposals have been considered in the preparation of this report and the formulation of the recommendations set out above.
- 7.2 The procurement process will be conducted in accordance with all relevant legal requirements, best practice principles, and procedures detailed in the tender documentation and with the principles of transparency, equality, fairness, and proportionality as stipulated by the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.
- 7.3 To achieve our intentions to co-design emergency fostering services during the beginning of any new arrangement agreed, the parameters for this will be described appropriately to satisfy requirements of Public Contracts Regulations 2015 to allow additional services to be taken forward appropriately. Any addition of developed services would be aligned with an entry point for the Framework Agreement. A programme of specific market engagement will also be developed going forward as this will be key to achieving co-design for this service.

8. Environmental Impact Considerations (Including Climate Change)

- 8.1 The influence and role of foster families on the way children and young people interact with their environment has been considered as part of an impact assessment. For example, in influencing behaviours through conservation awareness or efforts to reuse, reduce and recycle materials.
- 8.2 Other impacts considered include how supporting Devon's children and young people to be able to live with foster carers and / or stay with foster carers for a family-based short break locally could reduce / manage travel needs and emission of gases in response.
- 8.3 For further detail please refer to the published impact assessment.

9. Equality Considerations

- 9.1 Social impacts and mitigations within the impact assessment completed consider the impact of decisions on health and well-being of foster carers and children and young people. It also explores how service specifications, contracting arrangements and recommended service design will support protected characteristics. For example, a requirement around specific training to upskill foster carers to best respond to a child or young person's needs, making reasonable adjustments and provision of bespoke support and training to be able to best meet the need of children and young people.
- 9.2 The impact assessment also considers the potential positive impact of the recommendations being made on knowledge, skills, and expertise of staffing groups. In addition, it considers the role the commissioning opportunity could provide in presenting more job opportunities for individuals and the businesses locally and nationally. Both can impact on opportunities for children and young people to live locally and the local authority in supporting sufficiency of services.
- 9.3 For further detail please refer to the published impact assessment.

10. Risk Management Considerations

- 10.1 This proposal has been assessed and all necessary safeguards or action has been taken to safeguard the services to children and young people and the Council's position.
- 10.2 The risk identified and relating to fee increases and pricing has been summarised at Section 6 above. There are 2 further additional risks of significance which have been identified. One concern involves the sufficiency of IFAs on the new Framework Agreement, with the potential risk that the number of provider bidding does not fulfil our sufficiency needs. Another concern relates to how we are ensuring continuity of care and continuation of existing fostering arrangements under the current contract for children and young people in our care.
- 10.3 Take up of IFAs into the new Framework Agreement and contracting arrangement proposed. A key determinant of take up for IFAs is likely to be linked to price and the approach to managing fee uplifts and increases throughout the lifetime of the contract. Peninsula partners have designed the fee protocol with this in mind (see Section 6 above). This protocol will provide clarity and a sufficient approach to uplift to support IFAs to join. Other mitigations to minimise the impact of this potential risk include increasing opportunities to work in partnership, reducing unnecessary process and administration, providing flexibility in developing the service and ensuring that we engage and work closely with providers on the new Framework Agreement. The main incentive will be to ensure that DCC and Peninsula partners work solely with providers on the new Framework Agreement.
- 10.4 Scheduled entry points and opportunities to engage IFAs will allow providers to continue to join the proposed Framework Agreement over the next 5 to 7 years. The wider scope of services and the opportunity for IFAs to co-design and co-produce some elements of services, is hoped will provoke interest and attract IFAs to bid to join the contracting arrangement. Finally, the range of flexible call off methods for services for individuals should make it easier for IFAs to work flexibly with us.
- 10.5 Continuity of care and continuation of existing fostering arrangements under the current contract for children and young people in our care. Arrangements made for children and young people in our care under the current contract remain as is, up until the arrangement comes to a natural end for that child or young person. The commissioning and contracting approach summarised in this paper (see Section 4) will only apply to delivery of fostering services for children and young people in our care, made from October 2022 should approval for recommendations in the paper be granted.
- 10.6 The corporate and / or community risk registers have been updated as appropriate.

11. Public Health Impact

- 11.1 Since the start of the COVID pandemic children, young people and families have reported nationally and locally on the negative impact this has had on their lives, their opportunities and on their physical, mental, and emotional health and wellbeing. Many children and young people are or have experienced a negative impact on their mental

and emotional health and wellbeing and this is equally true of Devon's children in care population.

11.2 With the continuation of the pandemic into 2022, understanding, responding, and supporting the emotional health and wellbeing needs of our children and young people in care will be important. Individual service specifications, which will form part of the commissioning and contacting approach summarised in Section 4, will include requirements regarding: -

- Specific training for professionals working with children and young people.
- Awareness of support services available to which they can signpost children.
- The requirement to support children as far as possible with children to develop their resilience, and to support them to maintain positive emotional health and wellbeing.

12. Summary/Conclusions/Reasons for Recommendations

12.1 Approval for the commissioning and procurement arrangements proposed in this report to secure fostering services will provide more options to find the right high quality foster carers and family home locally for children and young people in our care. Securing local foster carers will enable support children and young people in care to maintain local connections enabling them to maintain relationships, achieve and thrive.

12.2 Accepting the recommendations outlined above will support sufficiency, increase quality, provide flexibility, and ensure value for money, all of which ultimately will strengthen the services available to children and young people in Devon.

12.3 Securing delivery of family based short break services will enable parents and carers to have a break from their caring responsibilities and potentially support families to stay together. These services will also support children and young people with SEND to have positive experiences which will support their emotional health and well-being.

12.4 The proposed Commissioning and procurement approach will secure a high-quality fostering service through providers that have been tested for capacity, capability, cost, and quality. The arrangement will have the flexibility to meet known future demands and the ability to develop to meet unforeseen future changes. It will engender a long-term stable relationship with our partners and providers whilst allowing management of the quality and costs of the service.

Electoral Divisions: - All

Cabinet Member for Children's Services: - Councillor Andrew Leadbetter

Interim Head of Children's Commissioning: - Rupa Parmar


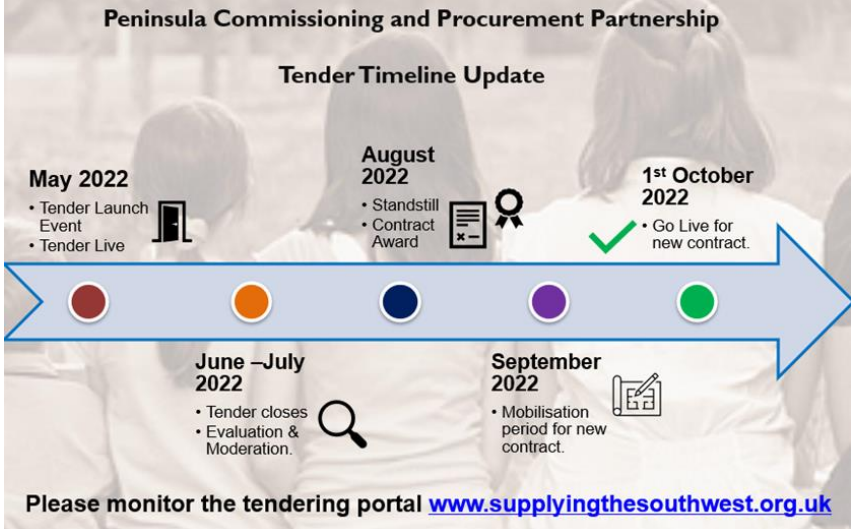
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Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers

Background Paper	Date	File Reference
Devon County Council, Sufficiency Strategy 2022-24. Finding a place called home.	2022-2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> https://www.dcfp.org.uk/training-and-resources/policies-and-procedures/sufficiency-strategy/
Devon Corporate Parenting Strategy 2022-2024	2022-2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> https://www.dcfp.org.uk/corporate-parenting-strategy-2022-24/
Devon SEND Strategy	2021-2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> https://www.devon.gov.uk/education-and-families/send-local-offer/working-together/what-we-are-doing-devons-send-strategy/
Impact Assessment		 <p>EQIA - Commissioning Stra</p>
Links to statutory duties and legislation regarding Short Breaks.	March 2022	An overview of links to legislation and summary of duties can be provided upon request.
Peninsula Commissioning & Procurement Partnership. Fostering Services Timeline.	March 2022	 <p>Peninsula Commissioning and Procurement Partnership Tender Timeline Update</p> <p>May 2022</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tender Launch Event Tender Live <p>June –July 2022</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tender closes Evaluation & Moderation. <p>August 2022</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standstill Contract Award <p>September 2022</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mobilisation period for new contract. <p>1st October 2022</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Go Live for new contract. <p>Please monitor the tendering portal www.supplyingthesouthwest.org.uk</p>

