

Impact Assessment



Assessment of: Commissioning for Peninsula Fostering Services, with independent fostering agencies (IFAs) from October 2022.

Service: Children's Commissioning, Children's Services, Devon County Council (DCC), and the Peninsula Commissioning & Procurement Partnership.

Head of Service: Janet Fraser, Deputy Chief Officer for Children's Services, DCC.

Version / date of sign off by Head of Service: Final Assessment / 29th March 2022.

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1. Description of project / service / activity / policy under review

This assessment explores the impact of the proposals within the commissioning strategy for new fostering service arrangements with independent fostering agencies (IFAs) for the Peninsula Commissioning and Procurement Partnership from October 2022.

DCC, Plymouth City Council, Somerset County Council, and Torbay Council ¹ came together to create the 'Peninsula Commissioning & Procurement Partnership' in 2006. The partnership works together to commission and procure a range of services to support children and young

¹ Cornwall County Council were part of the Peninsula Commissioning & Procurement Partnership in the past. They made the decision to withdraw from the partnership on the 5th February 2018.

people in their care locally. One such arrangement is the commissioning of fostering services with independent fostering agencies² (IFAs). These services support children in care to be able to live with foster carers in a family-based environment, and benefit from the experience of family life in situations where they may be unable to live with or return home to their families. Through the current commissioning arrangements, IFAs also offer a specialist fostering placements where a parent and their child stay with a foster carer to receive extra support, for an assessment and or to receive support in the community. These types of placements are usually ordered by the Court.

The proposal is to commission a new 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. IFAs will be able to bid to deliver across 6 different types of fostering services. The options appraisal, rationale for the future service approach that inform the recommendations can be found in the accompanying [Cabinet Report](#).

The current contracting arrangement started on 1st April 2018 and is due to end in September 2022. The Council's total gross spend on IFA placements, including family based short breaks, for the last full financial year (2020/2021) was £8,941,000. The gross budgeted expenditure for the financial year 2022/2023 is £9,312,000.

2. Reason for change / review

The fostering arrangements in place between the 'Peninsula Commissioning & Procurement Partnership' and IFAs are due to come to an end on 30th September 2022.

The Peninsula Commissioning and Procurement Partnership have made recommendations for a new commissioning arrangement for 6 fostering services including standard, enhanced, and emergency fostering services; 'Staying Put' opportunities; overnight family based short breaks services³ and parent and child assessments and placements. These services will support children in care and children, and young people with

² An [Independent Fostering Agency](#) is an external, voluntary or private organisation who must, by Law, be registered with and monitored by Ofsted. Once registered they are approved to recruit and oversee the approval of foster carers. Foster carers approved by the Independent Fostering Agency are then supported to provide temporary or long-term care for children and young people. Other duties for these agencies include: - providing supervision, support and undertaking reviews of foster carers caring for children and young people.

³ 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.

SEND, who are eligible for a short break service. These services will be delivered by IFAs and typically used when foster families are not available through our inhouse fostering service.

The commissioning strategy will be presented to Cabinet in April 2022. If approval is granted a procurement process will be undertaken through the summer and the autumn of 2022. As part of this process IFAs will be invited to submit a bid to deliver some or all the fostering services included in the commissioning strategy proposals. The aim would be for these services to be delivered from October 2022. For further detail around this please refer to the accompanying [Cabinet Report](#).

3. Aims / objectives, limitations and options going forwards (summary)

Devon's vision is for every child and young person in Devon to have the best start in life and the opportunity to thrive, ensuring children and families receive the right support, at the right time and in the right place.

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

DCC, like peninsula partners, has a high reliance on both in-house and IFA fostering services in meeting our obligations as corporate parent's for children and young people in the care of the authority. Finding the right foster carers is important in securing a stable and nurturing home which supports children's physical and mental health, and well-being. Research shows that finding the right family home will support children and young people to thrive, achieve the best outcomes both personally and academically as well as learn skills that will equip them for adulthood.

The current independent fostering services contract provides children and young people in our care supports this, 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.

In addition, family based Short Breaks for children and young people with SEND enables parents to have some respite 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.

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.

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. In addition, to support the delivery of our sufficiency obligations there will be no restriction on geography. IFAs operating locally and national will be invited to bid however priority will be given to providers who can ensure Devon young people are placed within or close to Devon. A focus on supporting placement stability and permanence for our children will be included in all specifications.

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. 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. People affected, diversity profile and analysis of needs

The following groups of people are likely to be affected by the proposals:

- Children in the care of DCC who are aged from 0-18 years.
- Care leavers aged 18 -21 years who would be eligible to be supported in a 'Staying Put'⁴ placement with foster carers.
- Parents and children requiring support through a specialist parent and child fostering arrangement.

⁴ The Children and Families Act 2014, describes legal duties the Local Authority holds to consider and make available a 'Staying Put' arrangement for young people who have been in the care of the Local Authority before they reached 18 years old. This arrangement includes the option for young people to remain with their former foster carers for a period of time after turning 18 as they become a young adult. This arrangement, where agreed and if determined to be supporting the best interests of the young person, can continue up until the young person turns 21 years old.

- Children and young people with SEND eligible for short break services, specifically overnight short break services.

The Devon Joint Strategic Needs Analysis (JSNA) 2021 suggests there are just over 2.3m children and young people aged between 0-19 years living across the Devon footprint. The JSNA indicates health and wellbeing outcomes for children and young people in Devon are mixed with hospital admissions in children and young people for mental health conditions, self-harm and injuries being considerable across Devon. This gap is even wider for vulnerable groups such as disadvantaged and children in care.

Since the pandemic, there has been an increase in the number of children and young people coming into the care of DCC. In March 2022, there were 819 children and young people in the care of DCC. Of these:

- 71% were living in a family home with foster carers, 23% of which were with foster families through IFA placements.
- 20% have been in our care for 2 years or more.
- 18% have a disability.

At the same time, 2,812 Children in Need were open to and receiving support from Children's Services, and approximately 1600 children and young people with SEND were being supported through short break services. This includes short break services offered within a community setting as well as those supporting overnight stays either in an appropriately registered children's home or with foster carers (family based short breaks). From April to December 2021, over 21 children and young people were being supported to have an overnight short break with foster carers.

Increasing numbers of children and young people with SEND are being supported by DCC. In December 2021, there were 8,123 children and young people with SEND being supported through a statutory Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) with social, emotional and mental health difficulties (SEMH), autism spectrum disorder (ASD), and speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) being the most significant areas of need.

Experience

Children in the care of Devon County Council are supported to have their voice heard and to share their experiences of living in care. This can include experiences of living with foster carers being overseen by IFAs as part of the 'Peninsula Partnership' contracting arrangements. Examples of where our children in care are encouraged to share their views with us include:

- Completing the annual Bright Spots Survey.
- Children in care and care leaver participation forums.
- The recent 'Stand Up Speak Up' event.

The new commissioning arrangement for fostering services through IFAs will require them to work with the partnership authorities to hear the voices and experiences of children living with their foster carers, and to use these to make improvements and changes where needed or as part of a continuous improvement process. For example, to support children to be involved in and informing decision making about them and the support they receive.

In addition, Devon Parent Carer Forum⁵ are supporting and working closely with Devon Children's Services to help shape and inform service improvements by sharing the lived experience of what life is really like for families who have children and young people with SEND, identifying problems as well what is working well or could work better. They support Devon County Council, the NHS, and other professionals to make sure that services in Devon are accessible and meet the needs of children and their families.

5. Stakeholders, their interest and potential impacts

In addition to the children and young people, parents and carers detailed in the assessment above, listed below are the key stakeholders who are likely to be interested and impacted by the new commissioning arrangements for IFA services that are detailed in the linked Cabinet paper:

| Stakeholder Group | Interest and Potential Impacts |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Independent fostering agencies | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The outcome of decision making will have implications for the provider market. |

⁵ The Parent Carer Forum, Devon is an independent group of parents and carers of children and young people with SEND. They are all volunteers who want to make things better for the families, children and young people of Devon. To find out more visit their website: [Homepage - Parent Carers Forum Devon \(parentcarerforumdevon.org\)](http://parentcarerforumdevon.org)

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing a service design and contracting arrangement that evokes interest and support from IFA market will be critical. • The more IFA's that sign up to any new contracting arrangements going forward, the more options, opportunities and range of foster carers and foster homes may be available to support children and young people in care. |
| Peninsula Procurement Partnership Authorities (Plymouth City Council, Somerset County Council, Torbay Council) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contracting arrangements are made in partnership and will need to be agreed by all to ensure a consistent approach is taken across the LA areas. • Decision making and governance arrangements for all peninsula partners are interdependent and will inform service delivery across the peninsula going forward. |
| Children's Placements Teams and Social Work Teams supporting Children in Care across Children's Services. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practitioners will need to be aware of how and under what framework, model, conditions and costs and where current vacancies are, when searching for any foster services for children in the care. |
| Parent Carer Forum Devon | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As an independent group of parents and carers of children and young people with SEND, who work closely with the Council, they will be interested in understanding how services included in any contract will benefit and support children and young people with SEND and their parents and carers in Devon. |
| Devon County Council, Disabled Children's Service | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This service takes the lead in assessment and provision of support options for children and young people with SEND and their families and where a child has a need for a statutory EHCP. • It is crucial that practitioners and Social Workers know what services are available and how children and young people can access these services (e.g., family based short breaks where specialist support is needed). |

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| <u>Virtual School</u> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All children in the care of the Local Authority will be supported in school and education through the Virtual School. Every child and young person will be visited in education and will have a Personal Education Plan (PEP) to support them to achieve their potential and the best possible educational outcomes. • The involvement of foster carers and IFAs in this process will be important for the child and young person in their care. |
| Education and School Professionals supporting children in the care of the authority (SENCo, Designated teacher for Children in care, Headteacher) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will want to be able to work with foster carers, keep them up to date with a child’s progress and involved in any support or working in school and to support sharing information. |
| DCC Adult Social Care & Preparation for Adulthood team | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a shared interest in any continued support and preparation for children and young people as they transition to adulthood, particularly those who meet eligibility under the ‘Care Act’. |
| Elected Members | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall decision-making lies with this group. Elected Members will be making decisions that represent and respond to the needs and interests of Devon communities based on the information and evidence provided to them by Officers. • Elected Members also need to be assured in their decision making that Devon County Council are meeting their legal responsibilities and making the best use of public funds. |

6. Additional research used to inform this assessment

- [Devon Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Summary - Devon Health and Wellbeing](#)
- [Local Authority Interactive Tool \(LAIT\)](#)
- Children’s Services Analysis Tool (CHAT)- March 2022
- [How Devon is performing - Education and Families](#).

- [Devon's, A Place Called Home is the Devon Sufficiency Strategy;](#)
- [Devon's Corporate Parenting Strategy.](#)
- [Devon's SEND strategy.](#)

7. Description of consultation process and outcomes

Engagement activities including virtual workshops, surveys and individual meetings have been undertaken to inform the commissioning approach and the service specifications that will form the tender pack. 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. 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 |
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| <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</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</p> |

| Engagement Event and Date | Examples of feedback received from children and young people. | How is this reflected in the new arrangement |
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| | <p>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>“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>monitoring following award will ensure service delivery meets the standards within the specifications.</p> |
| <p>Other Stakeholder Events including market engagement</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing a better understanding of therapeutic offers. • Providers are keen to know more about how data is being used by the local authority. • Risks, behaviours, and best practice relating to notice periods for placements in foster homes needs further development. • Earlier and better planning and funding for ‘Staying Put’ arrangements. | <p>Creating a closer working relationship and generating value for both commissioners and providers will support this.</p> |

8. Equality analysis

Giving Due Regard to Equality and Human Rights

The local authority must consider how people will be affected by the service, policy or practice. In so doing we must give due regard to the need to: eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

Where relevant, we must take into account the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, sexual orientation, race, and religion and belief. This means considering how people with different needs get the different services they require and are not disadvantaged, and facilities are available to them on an equal basis in order to meet their needs; advancing equality of opportunity by recognising the disadvantages to which protected groups are subject and considering how they can be overcome.

We also need to ensure that human rights are protected. In particular, that people have:

- A reasonable level of choice in where and how they live their life and interact with others (this is an aspect of the human right to 'private and family life').
- An appropriate level of care which results in dignity and respect (the protection to a private and family life, protection from torture and the freedom of thought, belief and religion within the Human Rights Act and elimination of discrimination and the promotion of good relations under the Equality Act 2010).
- A right to life (ensuring that nothing we do results in unlawful or unnecessary/avoidable death).
- The Equality Act 2010 and other relevant legislation does not prevent the Council from taking difficult decisions which result in service reductions or closures for example, it does however require the Council to ensure that such decisions are:
 - Informed and properly considered with a rigorous, conscious approach and open mind, taking due regard of the effects on the protected characteristics and the general duty to eliminate discrimination, advance equality and foster good relations.
 - Proportionate (negative impacts are proportionate to the aims of the policy decision)
 - Fair
 - Necessary
 - Reasonable, and those affected have been adequately consulted.

| Characteristics | Potential or actual issues for this group. [Please refer to the Diversity Guide and See RED] | How will the project / service / policy / activity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eliminate or reduce the potential for direct or indirect discrimination, harassment or disadvantage, where necessary. • advance equality (meet needs / ensure access, encourage participation, make adjustments for disabled people, 'close gaps'). • foster good relations between groups (tackled prejudice and promoted understanding), if relevant? In what way do you consider any negative consequences to be reasonable and proportionate in order to achieve a legitimate aim? Are you complying with the DCC Equality Policy ? |
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| All residents (include generic equality provisions) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small potential risk that any perceived change to contracting arrangements could create anxiety / uncertainty for foster carers employed by IFAs. This could impact upon children in the care of DCC and living with these foster carers. • Children and young people in the care of | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DCC are committed to working in partnership with IFAs to best support children and young people in care. The Peninsula Commissioning & Procurement Partnership and IFA market have a long-standing and well-developed working relationship. Both are committed to providing the best support for children and young people living with foster families. Engagement events and communications with IFAs have ensured IFAs have been |

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| | <p>IFA foster carers may experience anxiety or worry that the family they live with could be taken away from them or may be changed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This could therefore have a negative impact on emotional health and wellbeing for foster carers and children in our care. | <p>kept abreast of timeframes and how and when they can influence and support with service and specification design. Both will continue through the tender process through to award and the mobilisation of new Framework arrangements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devon’s children in care also have access to the MoMo (Mind of my own) App and are encouraged to share any views or concerns with us through the App or via their social worker or foster carer. • DCC will look to develop any communications needed for internal teams across Children’s Services. There will be designated points of point within both the Commissioning and Procurement teams who will respond to any queries or concerns regarding the contracting arrangements going forward. • DCC will work to listen to, understand and respond to any feedback or queries children and young people may have about where they are living. We commit to being clear, honest and transparent in our communications with a view this will provide reassurance and reduce any anxieties children and young people may have in respect to the commissioning approach with IFAs. |
| Age | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children in the care of DCC, being able to live with foster carers supporting their needs, and relevant to their age. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject to approval, the recommended option described in Section 3 would support delivery of fostering services in ways which are personalised to achieve the best outcomes and enable children and young people to develop and meet milestones most appropriate for their age. For example, through ‘Staying Put’ arrangements supporting young people to develop skills for independence as they move into adulthood. These arrangements would be monitored through review meetings for a child or young person and would also be monitored on a contractual basis with providers through formal contract monitoring. |

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| <p>Disability (incl. sensory, mobility, mental health, learning disability, neurodiversity, long term ill health) and carers of disabled people</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children in the care of DCC, being able to live with foster carers supporting their additional needs. • Children with SEND being able to stay overnight with a foster carer supporting their needs and relevant to their age (family based short break service). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The recommended option described in Section 3 would provide mechanisms to support and agree reasonable adjustments that could be made within foster homes to make them as accessible as possible for children in care. Thus, promoting inclusion and providing an environment to enable children and young people to thrive. For example, considering sensory equipment to support sensory needs or other equipment in the home to maximise accessibility. • IFAs will also be asked to consider and provide bespoke training for foster carers, this will be alongside regular supervision with the aim of ensuring foster carers are supported and equipped with any additional skills or knowledge required to meet the needs of children in their care. |
| <p>Culture and ethnicity: nationality/national origin, ethnic origin/race, skin colour, religion and belief</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children in the care of DCC are able to live with foster carers, and as part of a family that support inclusion, equality and beliefs and traditions that are important for them. • Children and young people with SEND being able to stay overnight with foster carers who are able to respect, support and encourage their cultural identity and religious beliefs (family based short break service). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The recommended option described in Section 3, will expect IFAs and their foster carers to be suitably trained and knowledgeable on how best to support and encourage children and young people from a range of different ethnicities, cultures and backgrounds to feel safe, secure and able to thrive in their care and without losing their personal identity. • As with the other key characteristics, formal contract monitoring will monitor and review and support IFAs on this. |
| <p>Sexual orientation, gender and gender identity (including men, women, non-binary and transgender</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children in the care of DCC can live with foster carers, and as part of a family that supports, understands and respects their sexual orientation, gender and gender identity. • Children and young people with SEND | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through the recommended option described in Section 3, IFA foster carers would be expected to provide a family environment which is nurturing and reflects an understanding, respect and support of the child or young person's sexual orientation, gender and gender identity appropriately. • IFAs will be expected as part of contracting arrangements to |

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| <p>people), and pregnancy and maternity (including women’s right to breastfeed)</p> | <p>being able to stay overnight with foster carers who respect and support their sexual orientation, gender and gender identity (family based short break service).</p> | <p>provide training and increase knowledge and awareness of particular aspects with their foster carers. For example, training focusing on understanding and supporting gender identity appropriately.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signposting to agencies who can provide further support for children and young people to build and/ or maintain positive emotional health, wellbeing, self-esteem and self-identify will also be a requirement. |
| <p>Other relevant socio-economic factors such as family size/single people/lone parents, income/deprivation, housing, education and skills, literacy, sub-cultures, ‘digital exclusion’, access to transport options, rural/urban</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact of COVID -19 pandemic for foster families and children in our care. This includes impact on emotional, health and well-being due to anxiety, exhaustion and fatigue, as well as hybrid ways of working balanced with limited face to face contact with other foster carers and families. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in unprecedented challenges for everyone worldwide over the last 18 months. To safeguard the emotional, health and wellbeing of foster carers, many IFAs are providing a combination of virtual and face to face support for foster carers. • It is likely hybrid models of working will continue into the future even after covid restrictions are lifted in full. |

9. Human rights considerations:-

The proposed commissioning and procurement arrangements of independent fostering services (IFAs) will be delivered in a way which support the vision, values and principles of United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children (1990) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006). This includes advocating the rights of all children and young people aged 18 and under to non-discrimination; best interests of the child; the right to life, survival, and development; health and health services; standards of living; review of treatment and care; right to education; as well as freedom of expression and thought.

In addition, The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) describes a further series of articles clarifying the rights of all individuals with a disability including children and young people. This includes: respect for each person's dignity and personhood; disabled people being full and equal members of communities/ society; equal life chances; education; equal rights to family life whereby disabled children should never be forced to live away from parents and families unless this is the best thing for them; health without discrimination; independence; standard of living; right to enjoy culture; recreation, leisure and sport in an equal basis to people who are non-disabled.

10. Supporting independence, wellbeing and resilience. Give consideration to the groups listed above and how they may have different needs:

In what way can you support and create opportunities for people and communities (of place and interest) to be independent, empowered and resourceful?

Supporting children and young people to live with foster carers in family environments can support them in the longer term to learn skills they will need for the future and in adult life, for example learning and managing personal care, money, budgeting and maintaining a household. Growing up in a family which encourages children and young people to achieve the best they can academically and have high ambitions and aspirations for themselves will equip and empower children and young people with the tools, self-belief and confidence they need to move into employment, further education or future training. This will also enable young people to support themselves, to be independent and engage with a career which could have a role in supporting different communities.

In what way can you help people to be safe, protected from harm, and with good health and wellbeing?

IFA fostering services provide 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 develop positive self-esteem, to thrive, achieve the best possible outcomes and to be prepared for their next steps into adult life.

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 increases to provide more opportunities for children and young people, and their families.

DCC, IFAs and foster carers supporting children and young people all hold a duty to safeguard and protect children and young people in their care, and for whom we provide services. Robust safeguarding mechanisms will be built into the commissioning arrangements to ensure children and young people are safeguarding from any risk of harm.

In what way can you help people to be connected, and involved in community activities?

Children in the care of DCC who are living with a foster family will be encouraged to pursue interests, hobbies and activities after school and that are available within their local communities. This will allow children and young people to learn new skills, meet new friends and peers and possibly go on to create new friendships with others in their local community. Pursuing interests and hobbies, for example involving sport, will be positive in supporting good physical health, but also in supporting children to build resilience and positive emotional health and wellbeing both in the present and into the future, where hobbies and interests are continued into adulthood. Similar benefits can be evident through family based short breaks as foster carers would be expected to support inclusion and participation in community activities and social networking appropriately for children and young people with SEND.

11. Environmental analysis

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| Devon County Council's Environmental Review Process | |
| Planning Permission | |
| Environmental Impact Assessment | |
| Strategic Environmental Assessment | |

| | Describe any actual or potential negative consequences. (Consider how to mitigate against these). | Describe any actual or potential neutral or positive outcomes. (Consider how to improve as far as possible). |
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| Reduce, reuse, recycle and compost: | N/a | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping children to develop behaviours and live/ take action in ways which support the environment positively as they grow and interact with the world into adulthood is important. • Supporting children in our care to live in family environments, local communities and attend school settings where there are opportunities to learn about the environment and conservation will all support a greater awareness and respect for local landscape and Devon's heritage. |
| Conserve and enhance wildlife: | N/a | |
| Safeguard the distinctive characteristics, features and special qualities of Devon's landscape: | N/a | |
| Conserve and enhance Devon's cultural and historic heritage: | N/a | |
| Minimise pollution (including air, land, water, light and noise): | N/a | |
| Contribute to reducing water consumption: | N/a | |
| Ensure resilience to the future effects of climate change (warmer, wetter winters; drier, hotter summers; more intense storms; and rising sea level): | N/a | |

| | | |
|------------------------------------|-----|---|
| Minimise greenhouse gas emissions: | N/a | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> With more children living locally with foster carers this will reduce the distance that needs to be travelled by children and young people, their carers, and social workers in maintaining contact and relationships. However, it should be noted social work is relational and given the safeguarding responsibilities held by Children's Services and professionals supporting children and young people, there is often a requirement for professionals to travel to see and support children and young people in person. |
| Other (please state below): | N/a | |

12. Economic analysis

| | Describe any actual or potential negative consequences. (Consider how to mitigate against these). | Describe any actual or potential neutral or positive outcomes. (Consider how to improve as far as possible). |
|--------------------------------|---|--|
| Impact on knowledge and skills | N/a | <p>The recommendations summarised in Section 3 above have the potential for a positive impact on knowledge and skills. IFAs successful in joining the new Framework Agreement will need to provide a robust induction programme, CPD and further training to ensure foster carers have the right skills, expertise and experience to best support children and young people living with them.</p> <p>The addition of new fostering services within the new</p> |

| | Describe any actual or potential negative consequences. (Consider how to mitigate against these). | Describe any actual or potential neutral or positive outcomes. (Consider how to improve as far as possible). |
|--|---|--|
| | | Framework Agreement, e.g. emergency fostering, and family based short breaks provide an opportunity for foster carers to grow and develop skills and expertise specific to supporting children and young people with specific needs. Thus, growing skills, expertise and knowledge across foster carers in Devon. |
| Impact on employment levels and local business | There is a potential risk that only a small number of IFAs will successfully join the new Framework Agreement. This could impact on employment opportunities available locally. To mitigate this, Peninsula partners have designed a fee protocol to support with issues regarding price and fee uplifts over the life of the contract. Other mitigations include continuing a programme of engagement with IFA providers and working with providers on the service design and specifications. The full mitigations are detailed in the accompanying Cabinet Report . | The recommended option has the potential to have a positive impact on employment levels and IFAs operating in the local area. If more Independent Fostering Agencies are successful in joining the new Framework Agreement and with demand remaining at the current levels, they are likely to need to recruit more foster carers and associated support roles across Devon and the Peninsula Authorities. This could create and support employment opportunities locally whilst also supporting and increasing sufficiency locally. |

13. Describe linkages or conflicts between social, environmental and economic impacts (Combined Impacts):

Section 11 and 12 illustrate how the commissioning of these services will have a limited detrimental impact to the environment whilst potentially supporting the local economy to grow as Devon recovers from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. In the longer term, keeping children and young people local means they be able to live and work in Devon when they transition into adulthood, thus supporting the local economy in the longer term.

14. How will the economic, social and environmental well-being of the relevant area be improved through what is being proposed? And how, in conducting the process of procurement, might that improvement be secured?

The availability and provision of fostering services and short break services supports the Council in meeting our statutory duties, and especially in delivering our strategic priorities in outlined in [Devon's, A Place Called Home is the Devon Sufficiency Strategy](#).

In delivering these statutory duties and the fostering and short breaks services being proposed there will be an immediate benefit to children, young people, parents and carers in Devon in so much that they will be able to access more, and improved fostering and family based short break services. Through the commissioning design and approach it is envisaged that there will be greater choice and the opportunity for tailoring services to the needs of individual children and young people.

The commissioning design has been influenced by learning from the current contract in terms of what has worked well and what could have been made better. It also brings in a wider range of fostering services and an opportunity to work with Peninsula authorities and providers to co-design and co-produce service specifications to ensure they are fit for purpose and best able to meet the needs of children and young people needing an emergency foster placement. The commissioning design also allows for multiple providers to deliver services, this should support in meeting the demand for fostering services and potentially reduce wait times for some families and children and young people to access a service.

15. How will impacts and actions be monitored?

A risk register will be in place and routinely reviewed and updated through the commissioning and procurement process. Risk and mitigating actions will assessed considering likelihood and impact the DCC corporate risk matrix.

Oversight and governance will be managed through the Peninsula Commissioning & Procurement Partnership and DCC Children's Services Senior Leadership team as well as democratic functions such as Cabinet across Local Authorities making up the Peninsula Commissioning and Procurement Partnership.

Subject to cabinet approval, contract award and mobilisation, the new IFA fostering services will be subject to formal contract and performance monitoring on a quarterly basis. Regular Provider Forum's will also take place to support providers in the delivery of services, reflect on quality and performance, risks, and to share and discuss information and good practice.