

Business Case to establish an additional Team Manager in the Children in Care Service Area

1. Purpose of the report

This report has been produced to propose that an extra Team Manager (J Grade) post is established in the Children in Care Service Area.

2. Background Information

There are currently three Team Manager posts in the Children in Care service area. One of these posts manages the Permanence Team that was established to enable us to participate in the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA). The Government expects all Local Authorities should be members of a RAA by 2020.

On 11.2.2019 there were 354 cases spread across the two other Children in Care Teams, with a further seven cases due to be transferred this week. In comparison there are 1,388 children open to Fieldwork, which is an average of 115 cases per team, with the highest number allocated to one team being 155.

The nature of the work with children in care means that these teams are often dealing with children with highly complex needs who have experienced significant trauma. There are statutory requirements in relation work with for children in care, all of who need to be allocated to a qualified social worker, managed by an experienced, suitably qualified social worker. A further factor impacting on the work of the team is that the care system nationally is at record levels which makes it increasingly challenging to identify placements for children with complex and challenging behaviour. Some young people have to be placed at great distance and experience multiple placement changes.

3. Impact

The current capacity challenge means that management oversight is disproportionately focussed on the children with most complex needs. This leads to delay in progressing permanence plans for more settled children. It also means that the plan for transitions into leaving care services are not managed as effectively as they should be. A well as the impact on the young person there are significant financial consequences of the authority resulting from this. Transitioning children to permanence can deliver savings as placements are discounted or children are supported to return to family members. Where transitions are not managed effectively there is an increasing trend of Courts advising that children should seek financial compensation from the authority. Ineffective transitions to adulthood can mean that children have to remain in costly placements longer than they would otherwise have to. The cost of such placements would generally be £750 per week per child but can prove to be much more expensive.

Recommendation

1. A Team Manager post is established in the Children in Care service area.



Clive Chambers - Head of Children in Care

12.2.19