

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

PEOPLE CABINET MEMBER

PROPOSAL TO CREATE TWO SOCIAL WORK POSTS

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To seek approval to create two Grade 8 Social Work posts.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 An Action Plan for Adoption was launched by the Government in March 2012 that sets out its proposals for tackling delay in the adoption system in England. It outlines a range of proposals to:

- Speed up the process for children; overhaul the service for prospective adopters and make better use of the National Adoption Register;
- Speed up the adopter assessment process including the introduction of a 'fast-track' for those who have adopted before; and
- Strengthen local accountability for the timeliness of adoption services.

Three main sections look at:-

1. Finding homes for children without delay;
2. Valuing perspective adopters and
3. System improvement.

The action plan also sets out how the government will measure improvements in tackling delay using a new performance tool, the "Adoption Scorecard".

- 2.2 In January 2013, the Government built on this action plan and launched "Further Action on Adoption" which set out its proposals for the next steps in tackling delay so that more children can benefit more quickly from being adopted in to a loving home. Other actions include the publishing of an adoption map with the intention of informing potential adopters of where in the country children are waiting to be adopted. It is envisaged that potential adopters would then apply to those local authorities to be assessed as adopters or to be matched with children if they are already approved as adopters.
- 2.3 The government informs of its plans to create a better system of recruiting and supporting adopters including the creation of staff mutuals to make a bigger contribution to the system as a whole and where all recruitment organisations

would need to register as voluntary adoption agencies and operate under existing regulatory arrangements.

- 2.4 The proposals encompass their vision of a system of fewer adoption agencies operating at larger scale with clear incentives to respond to the needs of all children waiting for adoption. This will involve legislating to shape the new system. One of the recommendations is the equalisation of fees to source placements between Voluntary Agencies and Local Authorities to £27,000 per placement. This is to counteract Local Authorities losing out financially if they sell adopters they have recruited making them reluctant to risk recruiting more adopters than are needed locally.
- 2.5 The Government believes that there is a more sensible and responsive way of organising adopter recruitment and assessment that would make the system much better equipped to recruit adopters.
- 2.6 Earlier this year the government provided Local Authorities with £8m, one off additional funding to support the local implementation of the adoption reforms. The local response to this is detailed below.
- 2.7 Under the “Further Action on Adoption” the government is providing financial support for greater investment in adoption in the form of a one off 150 million adoption reform grant. The specific focus being securing adoption reform. This additional funding is intended to help Local Authorities to:
 - provide more support to adoptive families to ensure the best possible outcomes and prevent disruption and break down which can give rise to more costly interventions in the future
 - Recruit sufficient adopters to meet the needs of the large and growing numbers of children waiting to be placed in permanent loving homes
- 2.8 Two thirds of these monies will be available to support Local Authorities in supporting adoption reform and enable them to target funding at the entire adoption process and the specialist support that children need. The remaining third to help Local Authorities address structural challenges with adopter recruitment and any back log of children who are waiting for adoption. Therefore, the government will provide one off funding to support Local Authorities in the equalisation of the interagency fee and to help address the needs of those children who have been waiting the longest.
- 2.9 The Governments Adoption reform grants enables North Lincolnshire Council to build upon its outstanding services for Looked After Children and ambition already expressed to improve services to our most vulnerable children.
- 2.10 North Lincolnshire is the Host Authority for the Regional Adoption Consortium Contract and takes a lead role in developing adoption services and enabling work across boundaries with an aim to secure sufficient adoptive families and maximise the synergies across region when implementing the reform program.
- 2.11 The aim of the reform program in North Lincolnshire is based upon a belief that this is not about more children being adopted, it is about identifying the right children, at the right time and in a way that they don't experience delay in securing permanence.

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1 Create two social work posts. The aim will be to increase the rate of and timeliness of adoption recruitment, assessment and placements.

4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

- 4.1 The creation of these posts enables North Lincolnshire Council to work toward the Government targets and provide more adoption placements.
- 4.2 Not to create the posts would limit our capacity to recruit adopters and meet the targets set.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)

- 5.1 To create the posts would cost £74,000 per annum, this would be met through the grant. The grant is a one off and payment and subsequent years would be met through income generation created by assessing and releasing adoption placements.

6. OUTCOMES OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT (IF APPLICABLE)

- 6.1 The Integrated Impact Assessment has been undertaken. Any issues raised have been considered as part of the planning process.
- 6.2 Democratic services will review how we can ensure all integrated impact assessments consider the appropriate responsibilities within the Council and Strategy development.

7. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION AND CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS DECLARED

- 7.1 Staff have been consulted from across the service areas and have been involved in the identification of the proposals set out above.
- 7.2 No conflicts of interest have been identified

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 That the Cabinet Member approves the creation of 2 permanent social work posts.

DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE

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Background Papers used in the preparation of this report - An Action Plan for Adoption
– Tackling Delay; March 2012; and Further Action On Adoption; January 2013